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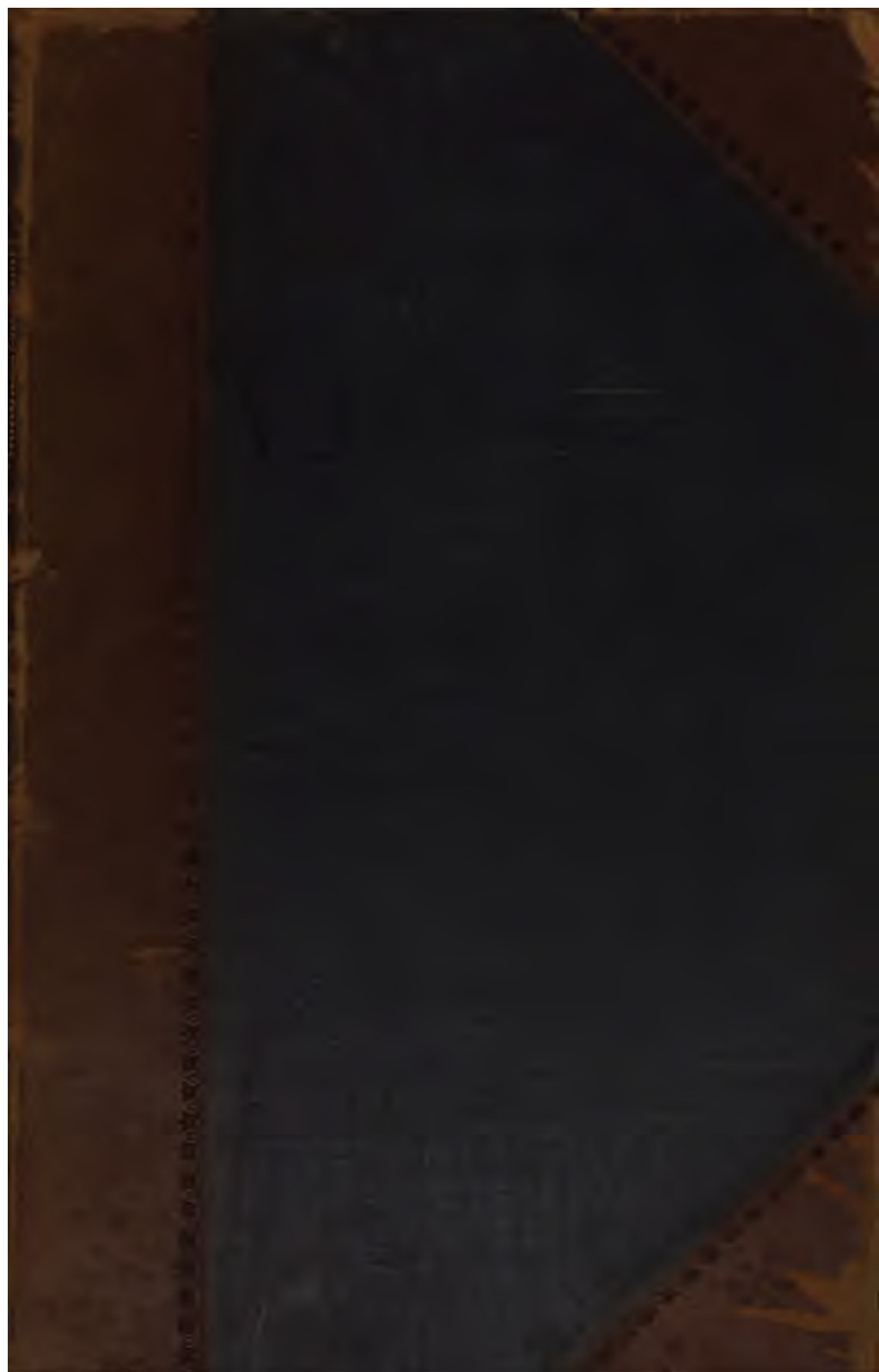
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¹
35.

709.



A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED
IN ST. HELEN'S CHURCH, ABINGDON,
August 18, 1835,
AT THE VISITATION
OF
THE WORSHIPFUL THE CHANCELLOR
OF THE
DIOCESE OF SALISBURY,

AND PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CLERGY THERE PRESENT.

BY
J. F. CLEAVER, M.A.
CANON OF ST. ASAPH, AND VICAR OF GREAT COXWELL, BERKS.

OXFORD,
FOR J. H. PARKER;
AND J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON, LONDON.
1835.



2 COR. xii. 8, 9.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

It would certainly have been interesting to have known, more particularly than we now can know, what that source of vexation was to which St. Paul made allusion in this text ; that " thorn in the flesh," that " messenger of Satan to buffet him," which, by his own testimony, was inflicted on him, as a correction from the chastening hand of his divine Master ; lest he should be unduly elated by the extraordinary favour, which that Master had recently vouchsafed to him ; lest he should be " exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations," of which he had been made a witness ; a witness of " things in heaven," such as the eye of man had never seen ; and a hearer of " unspeakable words," such as it " were not lawful (perhaps not possible) for a man to utter."

“ And lest (says he) I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” “ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”

It would have been gratifying to our curiosity, (though probably not important to our edification,) if scripture or tradition had recorded what the nature of that infliction was, which this faithful and favoured servant of Jesus Christ felt so heavily, and prayed so heartily (but ineffectually) to be relieved from.

To any Christians this might have been an interesting subject of consideration ; but to us, as teachers of the same Gospel, as entrusted with the ministry of the same word, it might have been peculiarly interesting to have known what was the nature of the evil, thus permitted to afflict this great Apostle, for his own good. And especially we should be concerned to know, (if such knowledge were attainable,) whether the annoyance, which this eminent minister of Christ so earnestly desired to be delivered from, were personal, or (if such a term

may be applied to such a subject) professional. Whether it were any infirmity (bodily or mental) felt only by himself; or some impediment to his ministry, which obstructed his usefulness towards others. Whether it were (as sometimes has been conjectured) any personal defect, or ailment, which might give occasion for some amongst his hearers to say, (as some at Corinth, who were impatient of his authority, did say,) that "his letters indeed were weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible;" or whether (as also has been conjectured) some powerful persecution, by Jew or Gentile, from without, or some vexatious opposition by false brethren within the Church, might, for a while, frustrate the Apostle's endeavours to preach the Gospel where it was unknown; or might sow the tares of heresy and schism, amongst the seed which he had already planted.

But although the nature of that annoyance, to which St. Paul has made allusion in the text, must probably for ever defy all conjecture or research; the fact that it did exist, and the lesson to be drawn from its existence, are "written for our learning;" and will remain plain and profitable

for the warning and the encouragement of all Christians, in every condition of life ; and in all periods and circumstances of the Church of Christ on earth.

To how many Christians, probably, in every condition of life, does it happen, that they find themselves in circumstances similar (at least in one respect) to those in which St. Paul appears to have been situated ! How many faithful servants of the same Lord may have felt and expressed a like earnest desire for the removal of some affliction, and with a like pious and praiseworthy motive ! How many zealous and patient followers of the same Master may have prayed repeatedly (like St. Paul) that it would please God to relieve them from some burden which weighed heavily, or from some thorn which sorely grieved them in the flesh ! And have desired such relief, (as we may surely suppose the Apostle to have desired it,) not from impatience at the weight of the burden so laid on them, but because it has seemed to hinder their exertions in " running the race " which is set before them ; not from unwillingness to endure any trial of suffering after the pattern of Christ, or of reproach for the sake of Christ ; but

because the peculiar trial to which they feel themselves exposed seems either prejudicial to their usefulness, or dangerous to their faith and steadfastness. How many Christians, probably, desire thus earnestly the removal of some burden, or the abatement of some affliction; not because they shrink from suffering, or feel ashamed of reproach as Christians; but because they sincerely believe, that by the removal of some impediment, or the relief of some infirmity, they should be better Christians than they are; and could more effectually "promote the glory of God," or more securely "work out their own salvation." It may indeed reasonably be presumed, that in proportion as any Christian might be zealous to promote the glory of God, or anxious to secure his own salvation, the more liable he would be to feel discouraged by any difficulties, or apprehensive of any dangers, in his path. So much the more useful therefore and needful for him may be the admonition to be drawn from this circumstance in the history of St. Paul; which, though it may be too obscure for the satisfaction of curious enquiry, is sufficiently clear and explicit both for our warning, and our encouragement; for warning, that we

should not depend on our own strength, nor repine at the failure of our own exertions ; for encouragement, to persevere patiently in well-doing, notwithstanding obstacles however great, and disappointments however repeated ; not measuring God's grace by our own weakness ; nor distrusting his assistance, though it may not be manifested in the way most desired or expected by ourselves.

“ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.” Whatever infirmity may afflict, whatever temptation may beset, whatever difficulties may seem to impede, any Christian in “ glorifying God on earth,” and in “ finishing that work which God has given him to do ;” the answer which St. Paul has recorded as given to himself, in (what we may presume to have been) a situation of similar discouragement, may and ought to be considered equally applicable, equally admonitory, to check repining, and to prevent despondency. Whatever may be the apparent evil, of which the abatement or the removal seem desirable ; if, in spite of honest endeavour, and hearty supplication for its removal, it still

continue to be a "thorn in the side," or a stumbling-block in the path, that very continuance is an answer to his prayer; it is a token that his prayer should be amended; and that he should ask not deliverance, but grace; grace to bear the evil piously, and to persevere in spite of it; not aid to be delivered from the salutary, though mortifying, annoyance of it.

If any Christian, in any condition of life, may sometimes require the admonition and the encouragement to be derived from this text, it may be peculiarly applicable to those who are engaged in the same service, and entrusted with the same ministry, as that great Apostle, whose example gave occasion for it; who feel themselves bound to watch as men that must "give account," not only of their own faith in, and obedience to, the Gospel; but must give account also of the faith of those whom they have undertaken to instruct; and of the obedience of those whom they are commissioned to exhort, to admonish, and to rebuke. Who believe that (as St. Paul said) "a dispensation of the Gospel is committed" unto them, which if they "do willingly," they "have a reward;" but if it be even "against the will," "a

necessity is laid" on them ; yea " woe unto them," if they " preach not the Gospel."

Who may fear not only " lest when they have preached to others, they themselves should be cast away ;" but fear also, lest the casting away of others, should be a cause of condemnation to themselves ; lest by any fault in their teaching, or any offence in their example, a weak " brother perish, for whom Christ died ;" lest by their neglect a sheep be lost for ever from their Master's fold, over whom there might have been " joy in heaven," if they had faithfully sought to restore it.

In proportion as any one feels seriously the obligation and responsibility thus imposed on him, it is natural that he should feel painfully any hindrance which may obstruct his endeavours, any infirmity which may diminish his success.

From the same feeling also, many things which would neither deserve attention, nor cause any concern, so far as they might only affect himself, may acquire a considerable (sometimes an undue) importance in his estimation, from the effect which he may perceive or suppose them to have on others. Even personal infirmities, (of health or accident,) and other ordinary afflictions of " mind,

body, or estate," which it might be unworthy of any Christian to regret, or to desire relief from, on his own account alone, may to a minister of the Gospel be painfully aggravated by an apprehension that they any wise impair the dignity or the efficiency of his sacred function ; by a consciousness that they weaken his own ability to teach and enforce the truth, or diminish the submission and reverence with which his hearers might otherwise receive it.

Equally (perhaps more so) this impatience of difficulties may be felt, in matters which depend on the disposition, and conduct, (not of himself, but) of those with whom he may be connected, or have intercourse ; much of good or evil, which might be comparatively indifferent to him, as an individual member of society, must and ought to affect him with anxiety, as it regards those committed to his charge. The prejudices, the perverseness, and even the immorality around him, which any other Christian might only witness with regret, as an unavoidable mixture of tares with the good seed, are to a minister of Christ matters of painful and personal concern ; if they obstruct good, which he is labouring to accomplish ; if they

open a door to evil, which he is anxious to exclude; if they cause scandal, or give an "occasion of blasphemy," against which he may consider himself called upon to offer unavailing opposition, or unwelcome and ineffectual reproof.

In how many various ways the prejudices, the perverseness, or the immorality of others, may be an impediment or a vexation to a minister of the Gospel, it must be needless to point out, particularly on such an occasion as this; where the experience of many present may too probably supply them with too frequent and familiar instances of it. The nature of such impediments must of course be as various, as the extent and circumstances of the charge to which each one may be appointed. It may not, however, be unsuitable as a general observation to suggest, that in populous and extensive districts, the spirit of party, the hostility of dissent, the active combination of adversaries, the lukewarm backwardness, or even the injudicious zeal, of friends, are the difficulties by which a minister of our Church may often be surrounded; and against which he must strive "by long-suffering, by kindness;" through "evil report, and good report;" being "reviled, yet blessing;" being

“ defamed, yet intreating ;” to make himself (as St. Paul did) “ all things to all men ;” that “ by any means he may save some.”

In a smaller sphere, of course, the disposition and example of individuals has a much more powerful effect on the moral and religious character of the community ; and (as the contagion of evil is far more easily communicated than the influence of good) it may often be in the power of a few, or even of one individual, from motives of interest, of malice, or depravity, to counteract the wishes, and frustrate the exertions, of many others, to promote peace, morality, and godliness.

To specify more particularly the nature and variety of the obstacles, which may increase the difficulty, or interfere with the success, of a minister’s parochial duties, would (on such an occasion) be superfluous. It may be equally superfluous, but will not (I trust) be thought presumption, to suggest, that in any such case, any minister of the Gospel may usefully consider the answer which our Lord gave to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and which he has (in the text) recorded for our instruction ; considering it (I need hardly add) not as an excuse for relaxation of his exer-

tions, or for indifference as to their success ; but as a check against repining or despondency, and as an incitement to perseverance in well doing.

The continuance of any difficulty if we have faithfully prayed and laboured for its removal, may surely be considered as a token that our Master requires us to persevere in spite of it. " His grace is sufficient for our weakness." It is not our ability, but our sincerity, that he requires of us, as humble instruments of his gracious purposes. It is not ability to overcome obstacles, but determination to strive against them, which is the qualification most needful for us, as faithful servants and fearless soldiers of our Lord. " His grace is sufficient for us ;" and can always enable us to obtain such a measure of success, as He may judge fitting for us ; His strength will not fail to accomplish His own purposes, whatever may be the weakness of the instruments He may be pleased to employ ; and we need not doubt that He will so employ us, if we do not make ourselves unworthy of His use.

And further it may surely be affirmed, that as the partial success or failure of our ministry is no certain test of our own faithfulness, or of God's

favour towards us ; so neither is the apparent result of our labours always a true measure of the benefit which may eventually proceed from them. Much good may have been sown, where but little has for a while sprung up.

Our Lord said to his Apostles, " Others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours." The converse of this may often be the case with a minister of the Gospel now ; he may have laboured long and painfully in the removal of blind ignorance ; in the suppression of gross vice ; for the discouragement of whatever may cause offence ; for the encouragement of whatever may promote the glory of God, and the welfare of those committed to his charge ; and though (after all) he may fail to find his reward on earth, by witnessing a satisfactory result of his labours ; he may yet hope that another labourer in the same service may " reap with joy," what he has " sown in tears ;" or that where he has prepared the ground with care, another may cast the seed with profit ; that where he has found the weeds of ignorance, stubbornness, and vice, another may find the soil of " honest and good hearts," able to understand

the word of God, and willing to receive it, and bring forth fruit from it.

It is, indeed, natural that we should wish to reap where we have sown : but such is not always the course ordained by God's providence ; He may often withhold success, where it has been diligently sought ; and He may often give it, not at the time, nor in the manner, which might be most gratifying to those who seek it. But if the endeavour, on our part, be faithful, " He is faithful who has promised" that our " labour shall not be in vain ;" and though he that " reapeth plentifully" may have most " praise of men ;" he that hath sown diligently, " shall in no wise lose his reward."

To " exhort one another so much the more, as they should see the day approaching," was the Apostle's injunction to his Christian brethren, when he anticipated for himself and them a time of more than ordinary difficulty, danger, and reproach. If any excuse or justification can be needful, for having offered any thing like admonition to those who are stewards of the same mysteries, and fellow-labourers in the same service, it must be founded on the apprehension that a day

may be approaching, when we all, more than ever, may have need mutually to exhort, and to "suffer the word of exhortation."

Each return of these occasions for "assembling ourselves together," brings with it an increasing probability, that many, even most of us here assembled, may live to witness events materially affecting our influence, if not our existence, as ministers of an established Church, and to experience changes in our Constitution, ecclesiastical and civil, the ultimate extent and effect of which it must be vain at present to conjecture.

The effect, indeed, of any legislative measures may partially, and but partially, be calculated, from the presumed intention of those who have most influence in the enactment of them. But the most sincere good will of those who are avowedly friendly to our Establishment, is no certain token that in any alteration affecting it, the result will correspond with the design. Whereas the bitter and undisguised hostility of others is a sure indication of the evil tendency of any measure, in the enactment of which their power may predominate.

But whatever change of outward circumstances, either for good or evil, may await us, our obligation

must remain unchanged ; and our encouragement and our prayer should be the same. Our obligation must ever be as now, to “ take heed to our ministry, that we fulfil it,” according to the ability which God giveth. Our encouragement should also be (as now) the assurance that “ God’s grace is sufficient for us,” and that His strength can compensate our weakness. Our “ hearts’ desire and prayer to God” should be (as St. Paul’s was for his countrymen) for ours also, “ that they may be saved ;” and that we may be faithful (however feeble) instruments in God’s hand for that purpose. And for the Church whereof we are ministers, let it be our daily supplication that the Lord may “ daily add to it such as shall be saved ;” and that we may be “ numbered with them” in the life everlasting.

THE END.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF JESUS CHRIST'S PRESENCE
WITH THE MINISTERS OF HIS CHURCH.

A

S E R M O N ,

PREACHED IN THE
PARISH CHURCH OF SITTINGBOURNE,
IN THE COUNTY OF KENT,
ON TUESDAY, THE 19TH OF MAY, 1835.

BY THE REV.
CHARLES COLLINS, M.A. F.C.P.S.
RECTOR OF MILSTEAD,
AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE RT. HON.
VISCOUNT LORTON.

"NO WEAPON THAT IS FORMED AGAINST THEE SHALL PROSPER: AND
"EVERY TONGUE THAT SHALL RISE AGAINST THEE IN JUDGEMENT THOU
"SHALT CONDEMN. THIS IS THE HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE
"LORD; AND THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OF ME, SAITH THE LORD."
ISAIAH LIV. 17.

PUBLISHED BY J. E. COULTER, SITTINGBOURNE.
TO BE HAD OF J. G. & F. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON;
HALL, MAIDSTONE; BURRILL, CHATHAM; RATCLIFFE, FAVERSHAM;
BARNES, CANTERBURY; AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.



TO THE
VENERABLE THE ARCHDEACON OF CANTERBURY,
AND THE
CLERGY OF THE SEVERAL DEANERIES
OF
OSPRINGE, SITTINGBOURNE, & SUTTON,
THIS SERMON,
DELIVERED BEFORE THEM AT THE ANNUAL VISITATION,
AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS INSCRIBED
WITH FEELINGS OF GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE REGARD,
BY THEIR
FAITHFUL FRIEND,
CHARLES COLLINS.

Milstead Rectory,
May, 1835.

S E R M O N .

MATTHEW xxviii. 20.

AND, LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE
END OF THE WORLD. AMEN.

OF all the passages, which are scattered over the sacred volume with lavish prodigality, to purify our faith, and confirm our obedience, none are more excellent in principle, none more simple and efficacious in operation, than the *promises* of God,—of that God, who is a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. Now in order to bring home to our hearts and understandings the full value of such passages, to comprehend their scope and feel their application, it is desirable to notice the peculiar *circumstances, locality, and time*, connected with their first delivery. Yet in analysing the large and expansive character of our text, my reverend brethren, the most consolatory, the most encouraging, perhaps, of all the declarations which He, who spake as never man spake, has recorded for the due discharge of our ministerial office, I have not the presumption to believe, that I can arrest your attention, or command your patience, by the

attractive charms of novelty, or skill. The *duties of the priesthood* have, on many occasions, been moulded into form, and wrought out in detail, by abler hands than mine: and the *general statistics* of our venerable establishment, presenting a valuable body of information, and therefore not ungenial to the discussion of an Annual Visitation, have already been traced¹ with an accuracy and fidelity, which cannot fail to satisfy the demands of critical enquiry, and baffle the attempts of rival competition. I feel the less inclined to enter upon the open field of debate, with respect to such topics, from a conviction, that, in an assembly, like the present, it is more reasonable that I should appear as the suitor, than the obtruder, of instruction; that I should appeal for spiritual advice to the judgement and experience of many around me, rather than press upon their consideration the crude, perhaps speculative, lucubrations of an advocate, so humble and unworthy as myself. Actuated by these sentiments, impressed with these views, and not unmindful of the dark and tempestuous storm which seems gathering over our best, our noblest, our dearest institutions, I have selected for the basis of to-day's reasonings and meditations a text, which, in language too plain to be mistaken, too cheering to be devoid of interest, speaks to us, my reverend brethren, of the Author and

¹ By the Bishops of Winchester, Peterborough, Gloucester, and other eminent Dignitaries of the Church.

Finisher of our ministry, as well as of our faith : and constitutes no doubtful, no unprofitable sequel to the charter and commission, with which we were invested at the solemn period of our ordination ;—a charter, which, unfortified by some such promise, would be but a dead letter,—the commission, but an inoperative act.

The PLACE, where this memorable declaration was made to the apostles, was endeared to them by a thousand thrilling recollections of the past. It was a mountain in Galilee, whither they were commanded² to repair in humble dependence upon the powers, and implicit acquiescence in the wishes, of their returning Lord. It was, probably,³ on the same mountain, that they had been taught,⁴ in common with assembled multitudes, those practical lessons of preceptive wisdom, which renewed, strengthened, and called powerfully into action the moral requisitions of the Mosaic law, by a spirituality not their own. It was, probably, on the same mountain that Peter, and James, and John had beheld with wondering amazement the mystical Transfiguration⁵ of their divine Master ;—that scene of grandeur and of glory, which, embodying the subjection of the law, and adaptation of prophecy, in the persons of Moses and Elias, to

² Matt. xxvi. 32.

³ This is by far the most natural hypothesis, and is supported by the opinion of Archbishop Secker, Grotius, and others.

⁴ Matt. v.

⁵ Matt. xvii.

the holier service of the New Covenant, displayed a visible representation of His future exaltation, and their own immortality.

THE TIME was one of intense interest, unparalleled concern. Eight days,⁶ at least, had elapsed since the Saviour had grappled with the last enemy, and triumphed gloriously. The agony, in the garden of Gethsemane, had passed away—the destitution of a Father's love, and a Father's grace had ceased—the cup of bitterness was exhausted to its very dregs—the anguish of the Cross was over—the sepulchre had yielded back the Holy One without seeing corruption—and Jesus, arisen “for our justification”⁷ from the unknown, unseen, untold sanctity of the tomb, testified to his chosen disciples, “by many infallible proofs,”⁸ the complete identity of his person; the exact fulfilment of every thing which “Moses in the law and the prophets did write;”⁹ together with the immediate assumption of a “kingdom not of this world,”¹ by receiving from the Father “all power in heaven and in earth.”² Not long before the rapid succession of these wondrous events, their hearts had failed them even at the prospect of His going up to Jerusalem, there to be mocked by the scribes and elders, and delivered into the

⁶ This inference is deduced from the fact, that Jesus appeared to the apostles *at Jerusalem* eight days after the resurrection. John xx. 19.

⁷ Rom. iv. 25. ⁸ Acts i. 3. ⁹ John i. 45. ¹ John xviii. 36.

² Matt. xxviii. 18.

hands of sinful men, and crucified. They could not reconcile the exertion of almighty power, so clearly, so abundantly developed, with this utter humiliation of the Deity, and the consequent failure of their high-wrought expectations. And even now, that Messiah stands before them, in all the plenitude of universal sovereignty, in all the glorious majesty of the resurrection, surprise and awe, doubt and fear, despondency and delight, seem to be the mingled passions most busily contending for the mastery within them. He had, at last, proved his supremacy over the powers of darkness by that single act, which forms the key-stone of the Gospel edifice, justifies his ways to man, and confirms his title, "**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**".³ With what rapture and regret would these "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word"⁴ cast many a longing, lingering look on past events, and well-remembered scenes, up to the very dawn of his miraculous career in Galilee, when they were first called to bear witness to the wisdom of his lips, and the wonders of his hand. And now that his earthly ministration was hastening to a close,—now that his visible and bodily presence was about to be withdrawn from them,—that He was soon to ascend, even in the course of a few short days from Bethany,⁵ to his Father and their Father, his God and their God,—oh! how deeply would they feel the approaching

³ Rev. xix. 16.

⁴ Luke i. 2.

⁵ Luke xxiv. 50.

desolation of their own estate,—how keenly would they anticipate the difficulties and dangers of their future labours in His cause,—how intently would they hang upon the farewell promise of Him,—their Guardian, Saviour, Lord,—who, “though absent in the flesh would still be with them in the spirit,”⁶—“*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*”

The TERMS, in which this gracious promise is conveyed, were well calculated to inspire hope and confidence amid all the darker apprehensions, and restless forebodings, and melancholy perplexity, which would naturally gather round the apostles in their strange and perilous situation. “*I am with you,*”—not, I shall be with you,—but “*I am with you,*”—I, “the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,”⁷—I, who “have trodden the wine-press alone,”⁸—I, who have come “from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in apparel, travelling in the greatness of my strength,”⁹—“*I am with you;*”—even, “*I AM,*”—who spake in time past unto Moses¹ from the burning bush,—who went before Joshua as captain of the host of the Lord,²—who so lately proclaimed in the crowded streets of Jerusalem to your unbelieving countrymen the essential prerogative of my godhead, “Before Abraham was, I AM.”³ “*Alway,*” that is, at all times, in all

⁶ Col. ii. 5. ⁷ Isaiah ix. 6. ⁸ Isaiah lxiii. 3. ⁹ Isaiah vi. 1.

¹ Exod. iii. 2. ² Josh. v. 14. ³ John viii. 58.

places, under all dispensations. Now if it be contended, that the expression "*always*" cannot, and ought not to extend beyond the actual ministry of the apostles, I reply, that the absence of the personal pronoun from the original forbids, by its very structure, so limited, so imperfect an interpretation. Nay in such a partial, such an exclusive view of the question, what would become of the spiritual interests of "*all nations*,"⁴ whom they were commanded to evangelize at the very same time, and by the very same authority? Could they claim exemption from the common law of humanity in order to perpetuate the instructions, and carry into effect the wishes, of their divine Master? Let me freely speak unto you of the apostles, that they are both dead and buried. If again the argument be pressed, that the phrase, "*even unto the end of the world*," comprises the period of the *gospel age* alone, (a signification, in which I cannot acquiesce, because the same words are applied by the same writer to the "*general judgement*"⁵ in three distinct passages,) it will not detract one iota from the value of the text, or impugn the justness of an unlimited application. In either case, the powers remain unshaken, the promise stands imperishable. For what limit can be assigned to the *gospel age* in its true sense, but that which will behold "*the heavens pass away with a great noise*,"⁶ and the earth crumble into its first elements, the stars unsphered,

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 19. ⁵ Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49. xxiv. 3. ⁶ 2 P. iii. 10.

the sun darkened, and the moon turned into blood ? No. As long as the world endureth, so long must the gospel age endure also : so long shall the mysteries of Christ Jesus be taught in every age, and every clime : so long are we bound to admit the existence and exertion of His almighty presence overshadowing the church militant upon earth. It is this fact, this grateful fact, my reverend brethren, which stamps a value upon the passage before us, it were vain to glean even from the doctrine of the Trinity, the mystery of the Holy Incarnation, the sublime code of scripture morality, the noble appeals of apostolic eloquence to the affections and understandings of men. Though many an age hath rolled along since the Saviour walked in person over the mountains, and vallies, and plains of Palestine, we are hereby taught to come, in our successive generations, to the same source for ministerial strength,—to gather our arrows from the same quiver,—to snatch the weapons of our warfare from the same armoury,—and to go forth to the battle in the panoply of the same Lord, conquering and to conquer, not indeed among the princes and potentates of earth, but amidst the unholy powers of darkness, even “ spiritual wickedness in high places.”⁷

It will not be expected, that I should attempt to explain the PECULIAR MODE, in which the promise of the text is realized by the personal functions of Christ’s duly

⁷ Eph. vi. 12.

appointed ministers. Doubtless, it is after a spiritual manner, and for a spiritual object,—the establishing⁸ of His kingdom in the hearts of men. The well-known image of the *vine*, upon which our blessed Lord has himself enlarged,⁹ points to the character and necessity of this gracious boon. The application of *marriage*, in many parts of the Bible,¹ to the mystical union betwixt Christ and his church, corroborates our present views, and pleads for their reality with unanswerable force. We know, indeed, that with the contrite and humble the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, delights to make his abode: and why? to reward humility, to confirm faith, to revive hope, to allay the questionings of doubt, to hallow the struggles of affliction. But the presence of Christ Jesus with his accredited ambassadors is of a higher order, because it is designed for more extensive and important purposes. It is, that they may be clothed with a better power than their own of drawing perishing sinners to that cleansing fountain of salvation, which flows so freely and so fully “for sin and for uncleanness.”² It is, that they may subdue the rebellion of pride, and quench the madness of unbelief, and smooth the rugged features of despair, “by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.”³ In the one case,

⁸ Luke xvii. 21. ⁹ John xv.

¹ Is. liv. 5. Jer. iii. 14. Eph. v. 30, 31, 32. ² Zec. xiii. 1.

³ Collect for 3rd Sunday in Advent.

it is a secret tabernacled with the convert for individual support : in the other case, it is a mighty and mysterious energy co-operating with the minister for the support, and growth in grace, of thousands, and tens of thousands, of his fellow-beings. Should this communication of spiritual strength ever fail to be imparted, what, I ask, would be the position of the church, notwithstanding the scriptural simplicity of her rites, the purity of her doctrines, the sublimity of her services? As the fairest form, that ever blest the eyes of a young mother who watches over the cradle of her first-born, would present but a still and statue-like outline, the calm repose of sculptured marble, were there no soul lodged within it to evince the workings of intellect, and give animation to the delicate organization of matter ;—even so would the church, unguarded and unpavilioned by the sacred presence of her Lord, unwatered by the continual dew of His blessing, be bereaved of her beauty, and her excellence, and her vitality, the very elements and life-chords of her existence. She might “ preach with the tongue of an angel,” but her preaching would then become “ as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”⁴ She might practice with all the rigour of an ascetic in the desert, but it would then be an oblation vain and valueless. Her glory would be departed from her, her efficacy destroyed. She would stand alone in the poverty

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

and blindness, and nakedness of spiritual widowhood. Even should gathering millions of her sons still assemble and meet together within her courts, they could never atone by their best homage, their deepest devotion, for that necessary in-dwelling of divinity, which gives holiness to every prayer, and authority to every act of praise. In her moral desolation, 'gemmed and tiaraed in all the bitter mockery of external pomp, she would resemble those wondrous monuments of Egyptian art, those magnificent mausolea of the imperial dead, those charnel chroniclers of corruption, which stretch their giant shadows over the plain, and each shadow tells the record of a past century.

The APPLICATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES, my reverend brethren, to our own insulated position in society, conferring on the priesthood its dignity, its utility, and moral weight, comes recommended to our notice by various considerations, which claim a brief, hut distinct, examination. Of what *materials*, then, are those *agents* composed, whom the Almighty condescends to employ for the general conversion of mankind? What are they, but beings shrouded in all the weaknesses and wants of mortality,—of “like passions,”⁵ like habits, like feelings with their brethren? Does the simple fact of their being ordained and set apart from the great mass “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for

⁵ Acts xiv, 15.

the edifying of the body of Christ,"⁶ *necessarily* involve the elements of security from *within*, of success from *without*? Is the solemn investiture of the Christian ephod *in itself* a pledge and earnest, that flowers of victory shall strew their path in preaching repentance and remission of sins through the prevailing name of Jesus? No reasonable man will dispute the power of the Almighty, had it been consistent with His justice and wisdom, to have restored, by the simple act of volition, every nation, and every tribe, and every family, to all the rights and privileges of their lost inheritance. The same God, who curtains the heaven with its bright, blue, gorgeous canopy, and spangled it with stars,—who spake the word, and Ocean teemed with life, and Earth became instinct with beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, and every creeping thing,—might, with equal facility, have carried the marvels of Omnipotence into the moral and religious world. But how would the exertion of such an attribute have been compatible with the *free agency* of the creature, which alone forms the basis of responsibility, and brings man a heart-stricken, yet willing disciple, to the cross of Christ? The real question hinges, not upon the inherent qualities of the Godhead, but upon the *actual manner* in which those qualities are exercised "for us men and for our salvation."⁷ Providence acts by *secondary* causes: and since the promulgation of Scripture

⁶ Eph. iv. 12.

⁷ Nicene Creed.

truth is committed to the keeping of "earthen vessels,"⁸ it becomes a point of absolute necessity, that those vessels, frail in themselves, and liable to contamination from an ungodly world, should bear the impress, and exhale the purity, of their proper sanctuary. But how can this be provided, except by an emanation from Him, who is Lord of the sanctuary, both in heaven, and on earth? Unless, therefore, "the God of Jacob be our refuge,"⁹ how weak and unsatisfactory will be the course of our ministration! how scanty and imperfect our "work of faith, and labour of love!"¹ Paul may plant, and Apollos may water: but it is God ALONE that giveth the increase.² We have no right to demand,³ with the Lawgiver of the Israelites, a *sensible* co-operation of divine power in furthering the purposes of divine goodness. We have no right to beseech the renewed exhibition of another pillar of a cloud by day,⁴ another pillar of fire by night:—to claim the manifestation of a new *Schechinah*⁵ resting visibly upon the table of our altar. Because the circumstances of the Levitical and Christian priesthood are widely different. The necessity for miraculous interposition no longer exists. Religion expects no fresh suspension of the general laws of nature. All that she asks is a fair and impartial examination of evidence already accumulated: evidence, that is written by the pen

⁸ 2 Cor. iv. 7. ⁹ Ps. xlv. 7. ¹ 1 Thes. i. 3. ² 1 Cor. iii. 6.

³ Exod. iii. 11, 12. ⁴ Exod. xiii. 21. ⁵ Lev. xvi. 2. Exod. xxv. 22.

of prophecy, substantiated by the finger of omnipotence, and holding in its grasp every part of man's destiny, from the morning of creation down to the very end of time. Old things have passed away. Symbols, and types, and figures, which were "a shadow of things to come,"⁶ though they once tracked the footsteps of Jehovah, have long since merged into the living substance of Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, "who is over all, God, blessed for ever."⁷ Under divine grace, the *objects* of our ministry are all attainable, the *difficulties* in our career are all to be surmounted, by the *ordinary* means of God's appointment. But little have we estimated the nature of those objects, the character and extent of those difficulties, if we repose in blind security upon our own capacity to teach the things, belonging to the kingdom of heaven, unblest by a verification of the promise in our text. For what are those *objects*? To develop and disseminate religious truth among all sorts and conditions of men. What are those *difficulties*? To combat and confound ignorance and error, prejudice and habit, false doctrine, heresy, and schism. These all come within our sphere of action, and assuredly require something more than the mere grappling of a mortal hand. Nor ought we to disguise from ourselves the *unwearied agency*⁸ of that evil power, whose sole object appears, from scripture revelation, to be the destruction of our race. Against such

⁶ Col. ii. 17. ⁷ Rom. ix. 5. ⁸ 1 Pet. v. 8.

combined foes, the devices of man, and the subtleties of Satan, it were vain to make battle with our own weapons, and in our own strength. I need not, in connection with acknowledged difficulties, touch upon those *personal sacrifices* which are essential to the ministerial character, and which wake no echo in the cravings of flesh and blood. Our *temper*, and our *talents*, and our *time*, must all be consecrated to the service of our heavenly Master. Yea, my reverend brethren, the hour cometh, when we must be content to forego the golden luxuries of polished life, and turn a deaf ear to the fascinations of the charmer in every shape, and every form : because these things have been “ a stone of stumbling ” to the stranger, “ a rock of offence ”⁹ to the members of our own community. Yet the sacrifice, even here, will not be without its own reward. “ The peace of God which passeth all understanding,”¹—the still small whisper of an approving conscience,—the fulfilment of the promise in the text will be with us, to sanctify, to strengthen, and to bless,—a fulfilment *sensibly attested*² for three centuries, during the infancy of the church, by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah. And what, after all, are such sacrifices, what are such crosses, the pursuit of holiness, and the practice of self-denial, when compared with the moral good we shall effect ? or contrasted with the fiery ordeal through which holy men of old were

⁹ 1 Pet. ii. 8.

¹ Phil. iv. 7.

² See Whitby in loco.

doomed to pass, at a period when a profession of the faith was the signal of persecution, and the harbinger of martyrdom.

But perhaps it may be argued, that **LEARNING** offers a safe shield from every danger, an impenetrable buckler against every foe. I freely admit the full value of secular knowledge, the great importance of a learned ministry. It is obvious, that a critical and familiar acquaintance with the languages and customs of antiquity, aided by many subsidiary sciences, is indispensable to a just elucidation of "the oracles of God."³ This necessity commenced, when the harp of inspiration was hushed : and it has increased, since the days of the apostles, in proportion to the exigency of the times, and the peculiarity of circumstances, in which our ministerial duties have been placed. But after making every legitimate concession to real learning and sound philosophy, as the *best substitutes* within our reach to compensate for the absence of that illuminating spirit, under which the first teachers of christianity spoke and acted, I must solemnly protest, here, in the presence of you all, against their being brought into the field, unassisted by the promise of the Saviour, unsanctified by the blessing of the Lord. There are matters in the Bible too high and holy for the ken of human lore : there are thoughts and ways, which must not be spanned or measured by the thoughts and

³ Rom. iii. 2.

ways of man. "The Spirit" alone "searcheth the deep things of God:"⁴ yet these are the very things, which challenge our earliest, and our latest care. It is the salvation of the soul, not the decoration of the body,—it is the government of the mind, not the economy and pride of life,—the subjugation of the passions, not the voluptuous aspirations of the intellect, to which our energies are vowed and due. Learning will improve the powers of *the head*, but learning cannot purify the affections of *the heart*. It may place the evidences of the gospel in a clear and convincing light: but it cannot convert the hardened, reclaim the wandering, speak peace to the penitent, or christianize the Gallios of the land. The case of Saul of Tarsus is too apposite to our present argument, and too remarkable, to be passed over in silence. Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,⁵ deeply versed in all the learning of his age and nation, possessing a strong judgement and vivid imagination, most eloquent among the eloquent,—it might have been expected, that one so highly gifted both by nature and by education, would have renounced his Jewish habits, and thrown off the shackles of favourite pursuits, and vindictive prejudices. The record of his history proves the vanity of such an expectation. He was, for many a year, a determined bigot in opposition to the truth: a bitter persecutor,⁶ even unto death, of them that believed in Jesus

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 10. ⁵ Acts xxii. 3. ⁶ 1 Tim. i. 13.

of Nazareth,—till a revelation from that same Jesus brought conviction to his soul, and humility to his heart. Then did the Spirit of God move upon the face of the gigantic masses of erudition, which stored his mind: then was the learning of Paul the Jew absorbed in the christianity of Paul the apostle. Ask “the most excellent governor, Felix,”⁷ *why*, when robed in the purple garb of Roman authority, he “trembled”⁸ on the judgement seat? Ask king Agrippa, *why*, when he had “entered, with great pomp, into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city,”⁹ he was almost persuaded to be a Christian?¹⁰ Ask the disciples of the Academy and Porch, *how* “the babbler, and setter forth of strange gods”¹¹ bore witness, in the polished courts of Athens, not only to “THE UNKNOWN GOD,”¹² but to the fleshly manifestation of that God among men in the person of the blessed Jesus. Enthusiasm, which generally savours more of earth than of heaven, and had hitherto dug a grave for his learning, was now tempered by a better spirit than that of man. It became in him a new passion,—gave a new impulse,—was directed to a new object,—and followed by a new and triumphant result. Like his divine Master, he thenceforward went on his way, and taught, “as one having authority, and not as

⁷ Acts ix.

⁸ Acts xxiii. 26.

⁹ Acts xxiv. 25.

¹ Acts xxv. 23.

² Acts xxvi. 28.

³ Acts xvii. 18.

⁴ Acts xvii. 23.

the scribes :"⁵ for God was with him,—“ *Lo, I am with you. always, even unto the end of the world.*”

We may turn, my reverend brethren, with satisfaction, to the GENERAL PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF AN ACCREDITED PRIESTHOOD, in further evidence and proof of the confirmation of this gracious promise. What a wondrous contrast is offered to our view in the present aspect of the Christian world, limited as it is, and the original darkness, the death-like shadow of its heathen state ! Taking our stand upon the heights of Galilee, and the mountains of Judah, we may cast our eyes in every quarter, and we shall behold many an humble convert bow the knee before the once despised Nazarene, and enroll himself under the banners of the Cross. And doubtless, as the tide of time rolls on, the knowledge of our God will advance, “ until the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in,”⁶ and the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. But was it natural to expect, that the peasant of Galilee should extend his moral triumphs over worldly wisdom, and policy, and power ? Was it natural to expect, that a few “ unlearned and ignorant ”⁷ fishermen of Tiberias should achieve a bloodless victory over kings, and princes, and rulers, in almost every province of the globe ? Was it natural to expect, that the system which they adopted,

⁵ Matt. vii. 29. ⁶ Rom. xi. 25. ⁷ Acts iv. 13.

(and, blessed be God, left the record of their adoption for others to sanction and approve,) should overthrow the cumbrous and costly fabric of pagan idolatry,—stop the prevailing torrent of corruption,—and be mainly instrumental in re-composing the fragments of a ruined world? “Where is the wise? where is the scribe?”⁸ where is the haughty Stoic? the self-righteous Pharisee? the philosophical antagonist of new doctrines? “They are dead, they shall not live: they are deceased, they shall not rise!”⁹ For in that peasant of Galilee “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:”¹—in those fishermen of Tiberias are found the ministers and missionaries of the Most High:—in that system, which they established, and against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail,”² much less the machinations of man, we trace no elements of decay, we recognise no symptoms of dissolution, no bright delusive lights that sparkle for a season, and then vanish away,—but the concentration of all that is holy, and just, and wise, and good,—the union of all that speaks to us of the immensity of God, and the littleness of Man,—the combination of those channels of divine grace, to which every child of Adam may repair for hope and charity, for patience and humility, for consolation and strength, faith and obedience, the seal of their adoption, the sanctification of their souls from the

⁸ I. Cor. i. 10.

⁹ Is. xxvi. 14.

¹ Col. ii. 9.

² Matt. xvi. 18.

cradle to the grave, the best, the surest passport from earth to heaven, from time to eternity.

In drawing my observations to a close, I must crave your indulgence for a few moments, my reverend brethren, while I glance, briefly and cursorily, at the NECESSITY of that branch of pure and reformed religion, which is “built upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,”³ and which is, happily for the general interests of society, by law established in these realms. The extent of this necessity is felt and acknowledged by us all. Daily experience tends more and more to expose the vicious principle,⁴ and total inefficiency,⁵ of the Voluntary System; and therein to confirm the value and importance of an *establishment*, communicating its blessings, silently, but efficaciously, to *every section* of the community: by the *unity of principle* which consolidates its movements, and by the *occupation of territory*, which is commensurate with the influence of its services, and the boundaries of the country. Like some mighty stream, which rises in mountain solitude and secrecy, and spreads its arms abroad, flowing over many lands, and fertilizing every spot by which it majestically sweeps along,—the Church of England carries, with her venerable name, the glad

³ Eph. ii. 20.

⁴ Consult “Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister” *passim*.

⁵ See Quarterly Review, vol 51, p. 139--144.

tidings of salvation, not only among the sons and daughters of her own soil, who have not yet forsworn the allegiance of their virgin faith, by an able and authorized ministry at home,—but also with equal fidelity and success into many a stranger land, by the piety and zeal of her *missionaries* abroad. And is it against such a spiritual mother, that the unnatural apostacy of some of her recreant children is directed? Is it against her, who hath ever spoken the language of charity, and taught the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and ministered to the spiritual wants of the people in their native tongue, and would fain have gathered all her offspring together under the shadow of her wing, that the *infidel*, and the *papist*, and the *schismatick*,⁶ have leagued together in an unholy confederacy? Alas! for Britain, that the tale is true. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”⁷ We have fallen upon evil days. Busy has been the tongue of clamour and of calumny, where the officers of her temple might have expected the cheering sounds of commendation, the still more cheering vows of fidelity and attachment. Their persons have been derided,—their ordinances reviled,—their property endangered,—their very office degraded and despised. I

⁶ The proceedings in the House of Commons, during the last few weeks, supply a melancholy commentary on this painful statement. *Tantæ-ne animis cœlestibus iræ?*

⁷ Is. i. 3.

presume not to question the justice of toleration. I wish not to fetter the liberty of conscience. I am no enemy to improvement. I am no believer in human infallibility, whether claimed by individuals, by councils, or by communities. Infallibility belongs to God alone. I dare not aver, that our ecclesiastical polity, based as it is upon earth, and reaching unto heaven, hath not contracted something of the dross which cleaveth to our very nature. But I will say, that, on this side of the grave, there exists no unmixed good, no unalloyed blessing, no system absolutely free from objection. Nay, I will frankly and boldly maintain, that there is not to be found, in the whole world, a system embracing so much of good, and so little of evil, a system so rich in the manifold treasures of wisdom and of grace, as our holy and apostolic church, the most popular and democratic part of our mixed constitution. I forbear to occupy the high ground, on which, with the Bible in one hand, and History in the other, I might safely take my stand. I merely advert to the *utility* and *efficacy* of the church for those general purposes of religious instruction, for which alone, in the fashionable creed of the political economist, a national establishment seems to be desirable. To meet the more than whispered hostility, which swells the gale of base faction, and still baser intrigue, and which, if carried to its full extent, must eventually prove a Nation's sepulchre,--yes--the sepulchre of buried

hopes, and violated rights, of crushed interests and deflated energies,—the sepulchre of all the chivalry, and all the glory, and all the flower of the land,—to meet this unhallowed crusade of false friends and open enemies,—to drown this maddening tocsin which has been rung for the confiscation of our property, and the abolition of our privileges,—I would turn to the volume of inspiration for that unearthly and sublime spirit of action, “love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”⁹ I would suggest the urgent necessity of our thinking, and speaking, and acting, like men “whose conversation is in heaven,”¹⁰ like ministers who can sacrifice feeling on the shrine of religion, every thing, but duty, on the altar of Christ Jesus. I would face the present alarming crisis,—not by shrinking from the path of rectitude, not by any fallacious and unmanly compromise of principle,—but by endeavouring to combine the policy of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove;¹¹—more especially, by preferring many a fervent and effectual prayer for support before the throne of our great High Priest, who hath promised,—and, remember, His promise is unchangeable as his own holiness, eternal as the rock of ages, omnipotent as the ancient of days,—“*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*”

⁹ Matt. v. 44. ¹⁰ Phil. iii. 20. ¹¹ Matt. x. 16.

We are described² in holy writ, as *watchmen* :³ and it is the duty of watchmen to be upon their guard, ready to warn, prepared to act. We are described, as *shepherds* :⁴ and it is the duty of shepherds to bear the extremities of heat and cold, storm and sunshine,—to feed, guide, and defend the sheep in the fold, to seek the lost, and bring back the wanderers to their home. We are described, as *stewards* :⁵ and it is the duty of stewards to be diligent and faithful in the trusts committed to their charge. While, therefore, as *men* we claim a fair participation of all the privileges of society, while as *citizens* we maintain our inalienable right to the free and full enjoyment of our temporalities, let us never forget, as *ministers*, the sacred and sublime objects of our holy vocation, the responsible obligations we owe, not to man, but to the everlasting God. An unnatural feeling, (growing, perhaps, in common with other causes, out of the freedom of opinion and debate which marked the early progress of the Reformation, and has not diminished since that glorious era) has, I grieve to observe, almost extinguished those *tokens of deference and respect* which were once paid to our sacred order. They are now altogether withheld: or, if paid, they are paid for the sake of the *individual*, rather than of the

² This view of the subject is handled by Barrow with his usual ability, and colossal learning, in a Consecration Sermon (see Works, vol. i. p. 318,) which will well repay a close and careful analysis.

³ Is. lii. 8...lvi. 10. ⁴ Ezek. xxxiv. 2. ⁵ I. Cor. iv. 1.

those unwearied ministers of the altar, who have "turned many to righteousness:"³ and that gracious promise, which we have this day examined, and which will have cheered and supported us during our struggles here, will hereafter be renewed and immortalized in the bosom, and in the joy of our Lord.

³ Dan. xii. 3.

F I N I S .

**JESUS CHRIST
THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE
LIFE;**

BEING

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE TRIENNIAL VISITATION,

**HELD IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF CHIPPENHAM, ON THE 19TH
OF AUGUST, 1935,**

AND

Published at the Request of the Clergy then present.

BY THE

REV. RANDLE HENRY FEILDEN, M.A.

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TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP,

AND TO
THE REVEREND THE CLERGY,

OF THE
DIOCESE OF SALISBURY,
THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

IS
VERY RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY
THE AUTHOR.

formularies of the United Church of England and Ireland, proclaim alone through belief in that all-sufficient, because divine, Mediator, who is "the way, the truth, and the life"—"the common salvation, for which you profess to hope, who have been dedicated" in baptism, "by our office and ministry," to the faith of Christ crucified and the worship of a tri-une Jehovah—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—"the common salvation" is even now the object, in a more than ordinary degree, of the malicious hostility of our "adversary the Devil." His "wiles," we know, are as ingenious and numberless as that desire of compassing mischief, from which they spring, is intense and infinite; but we have a most remarkable proof of the perfection of his arts, and of his multifarious exertions to secure the unvarying evil at which he aims, in the fact, that, to produce a particular end, he not unfrequently employs, with perfect success, means the most opposite in their nature, and, apparently, the least likely to issue in a similar result.

Superstition, with its "lying vanities," and Rationalism, with its proud boastings, are "wiles of the Devil,"^f each possessing a character specifically its own, of which the one involves principles essentially at variance with those of the other. Superstition commands her votaries

to receive, with self-abasing credulity, her interpretation of Revealed Truth, even though the doctrine she propounds be not merely above, but absolutely contradictory, to human reason; thus Popery would enjoin its devotee to an undoubting belief of the awful and mysterious miracle of transubstantiation, notwithstanding that the testimony of his own senses—the only competent judges in such a case of the reality of the stupendous change, and the very judges appealed to by our Lord himself in establishing the identity of his risen body—positively denies that the asserted marvel has been wrought. Rationalism, on the contrary, invites her admirers to accept with self-complacent approval, her explanation of God's Word, even though the compendium she offers, has degraded Revelation to a level beneath the credence of that faculty, which renders man capable of such faith as is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;”^g thus Socinianism would flatter its follower into a contemptuous disbelief of the sublime truth of a Divine Trinity—into a scornful rejection of the great “mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh”^h—and into a proud refusal of the spiritual aid of “the eternal” “Comforter,” although his own finite intellect will naturally anticipate, in an apocalypse of the Infinite Intelli-

g Heb. xi. 1.

h 1 Tim. iii. 16.

gence, a communication of super-human knowledge, and although the voice of his own reason must echo the very question of his Bible, "Canst thou by searching find out God; canst thou understand the Almighty unto perfection?"ⁱ

We perceive, therefore, how utterly at variance with each other are the religious systems of which I have been speaking; and yet, I ask, do we not, at the present moment, see them closely combined, by the wisdom of the Serpent, in a monstrous alliance for the prosecution of a common aim? The Papist and the Socinian, the Deist and "the fool" who "hath said in his heart there is no God,"^k are, indeed, actuated by different motives, though they have coalesced for a single purpose; and, no doubt, the overthrow of the Established Religion of these realms, recommends itself, on peculiar and seemingly righteous grounds, to each individual section of the heterogeneous body which is favourable to that object; but—unlike these his always deluded, and, in Christian charity I would believe, his usually unconscious agents—the Prince of Darkness himself is ever influenced by one solitary feeling, even the desire of frustrating "the common salvation;" and, assuredly, he sees in the downfall of our Church, the most effectual means of completing his object. He has found her the faithful and the firm, although

ⁱ Job xi. 7.

^k Ps. liii. 1.

the tolerant guardian of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God;"¹ and the perilous position in which he has placed her, through the concurrent assault of a host of foes, inveterately hostile to each other as regards almost every principle save that of enmity towards her, affords conclusive evidence that the barrier she has opposed, through "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God,"^m to Apostacy and Heterodoxy and Anti-christ under every varying garb and form, has not been opposed in vain.

Whilst, however, we thus perceive that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,"ⁿ we learn, at the same time, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;"^o and, therefore, even though the cunning of political expediency, and the bitterness of religious rivalry, and the liberalism of latitudinarian principle should visit us, because we "speak the things which become sound doctrine,"^p with the stigma of partisanship, we feel, in the present posture of affairs, especially bound, as men "who watch for souls as as they that must give account,"^q to address, at once to ourselves, to each other, and to our

1 1 Tim. i. 11.

m Eph. vi. 17.

n Eph. vi. 12.

o 2 Cor. x. 4.

p Tit. ii. 1.

q Heb. xiii. 17.

charge, the general warning of St. Peter, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, stedfast in the faith;"^r and that this admonition, which the Apostle so solemnly offers, alike to the "Shepherd" and to the "flock of God," may be duly attended to by each, let us, with an earnest prayer for the presence and guidance of that Holy Ghost, who only can "lead" us "into all truth,"^s proceed to consider the divine exposition contained in my text of THE FAITH, through stedfastness wherein, we are enjoined to resist our common "adversary the Devil."

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

These words of our blessed Lord imply a fact, which it is the first object of the Bible to reveal, the fact that Man is by nature in a state of separation from his Heavenly Father. Now St. Paul's declaration that the Creator "is not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being,"^t and the sublime inquiry of the Psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

^r 1 Peter v. 8.

^s John xvi. 13.

^t Acts xvii. 27, 28.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me"^a—these Scriptural texts prove plainly that this separation is not a physical, but a moral one; and the occasion of it is proclaimed to every man in those few and simple, yet incontrovertible, words of the prophet Isaiah, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God."^v

That "all we like sheep have gone astray;" that "we have turned every one to his own way,"^w is the confession which our Church has borrowed from the lips of inspiration, and is the language which each really enlightened conscience will whisper from the inmost recesses of the soul; and though, alas! too many of that multitude, who "profess and call themselves Christians," forget that, because "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,"^x "man is very far gone from original righteousness,"^y yet, I apprehend, there are few of them, who would refuse to exclaim with the Psalmist, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep;"^z or, who would deny, as an abstract proposition, that affirmation of our Lord, which my text contains, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me:"

u Ps. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, 10. v Isa. liv. 2. w Isa. liii. 6.

x Jer. xvii. 9. y 9th Article. z Ps. cxix.

may more; there are few of these professed believers of the Gospel, who, knowing that he is "a teacher come from God,"^a and admitting that "never man spake like this man,"^b would hesitate to address Jesus in the language of David, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life."^c Constrained to acknowledge the sublimity of Christ's moral code, they have marked in himself the perfect personification of even his most exalted doctrines; they have seen him "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;"^d they have watched him as he went about doing good; they have listened to that touching prayer, which he breathed for his murderers in spite of all the agonies of his cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;"^e and believing that, in the admirable purity and self-denying activity of his life, and in the patient obedience and unshaken constancy of his death, he was "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps,"^f they can cordially make to him the two-fold confession, "Master, we know that thou art true, and that thou teachest the way of God in truth."^g Moreover, they "remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, being raised from the dead,"^h hath "brought life and immortality to light

a John iii. 2. b John vii. 46. c Ps. xvi. 11. d Heb. vii. 26.

e Luke xxiii. 34. f 1 Peter ii. 21, g Matt. xxii. 16.

h 2 Tim. ii. 8.

through the Gospel,"ⁱ and, therefore, they can borrow with all sincerity the declaration of Simon Peter to his Lord, "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

But, whilst we admit with them, that Jesus is "the way," as the bright ensample, who exhibits to us in his whole walk and conversation, the will of God concerning us; that Jesus is "the truth," as "the faithful and true witness,"^k who testified the verity of his doctrines even with his blood; and that Jesus is "the life," as the "first begotten of the dead,"^l who, by "the power of his resurrection,"^m can animate his disciples with the sublime assurance, "because I live, ye shall live also"ⁿ—yet do we maintain that "no man cometh unto the Father but by" him, on grounds far higher, infinitely more wonderful, unspeakably more glorious, than any of those at which I have just glanced.

"JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE WAY." Now, though doubtless this word does imply the course to be followed in pursuing a given point, yet certainly, in its primary signification, it denotes the PRECISE MEANS, by which that point is to be gained: and THE WAY, on which we travel, as the actual communication between two places, otherwise separated by an impervious forest of unlimited extent, surely is not to be

i 2 Tim. i. 10. j John vi. 68. k Rev. iii. 14. l Rev. i. 5.

m Phil. iii. 10.

n John xiv. 19

confronted with the DIRECTIONS indicated for our guidance by the index of the road. As, therefore, our Lord says, "I AM the way," and not merely, I point the way, we conclude that he is here speaking of himself not only figuratively, as respects his doctrines and example, but also literally, as regards his person and office. The context appears naturally to lead to this conclusion: and in accordance with it, and with none other, can we understand or explain that emphatic declaration of the good Shepherd, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep," and that striking language of the Apostle to the Hebrews and to the Ephesian church, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," "for THROUGH HIM we, both" Jews and Gentiles, "have access, by one Spirit unto the Father."^a

But, again, "JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE TRUTH:" now, unquestionably, this declaration is to be regarded as comprehending, both a reference to the character which he bore as the true Messiah of God, the substance of all the shadows of the Jewish Dispensation, even him,

^a John x. 7

^p Heb. x. 19—22.

^q Eph. ii. 18.

“to whom give all the prophets witness,” and a reference likewise to the doctrine, which, as the true “Word of God,” he promulged, even that “through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” But this clause of the text must also be viewed as the solemn and distinct asseveration of our Lord, that in Him **PERSONALLY**, was embodied the truth of God, which was to be, and which has been, so wonderfully secured and so gloriously vindicated, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”^t

It is written, that the voice of Jehovah in old time, pealing from the cloud on Sinai, “proclaimed the name of the Lord” to Moses, thus, “The Lord, The Lord God, that will by no means clear the guilty.”^u Now, through the confession of David and of St. Paul that “there is none righteous, no, not one,”^v “the whole world” has “become guilty before God;”^w and, to the prophet’s inquiry, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”^x To this anxious

r Rev. xix. 13. s Acts x. 43. t Heb. x. 10. u Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

v Rom. iii. 10. w Rom. iii. 19. x Micah vi. 6, 7.

and most interesting inquiry, the Lord himself has thus replied by the mouth of the Psalmist, "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds, for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills;" and noman "can by ANY MEANS REDEEM his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" Thus saith the Lord, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," for "the wages of sin is death;" but — "the gift of God is eternal life" — "what shall we say then, is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" "with Him is no variableness neither shadow of turning:" "the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent." But, "the gift of God is eternal life THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord;" because, "he hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that WE might be made the righteousness of God in HIM," "who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a BODY hast thou prepared ME: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the

y Ps. l. 9, 10. z Ps. xlv. 7. a Ezek. xviii. 4. b Rom. vi. 23.

c Rom. ix. 14. d James i. 17. e 1 Sam. xv. 29.

f 2 Cor. v. 21.

g 1 Peter ii. 24.

volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God :"^h "but he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,"ⁱ for "the Lord hath LAID UPON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL"^j—and now, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"^k because, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin," he "condemned sin in the flesh"^l of Him, whom "he made the surety of a better testament"^m than "the Law" which "was given by Moses," even that He himself "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;"ⁿ for the dignity of Christ's nature has secured an atoning efficacy to the shedding of his precious blood, and has imparted a superogatory value to his perfect observance of that law, whereof "sin is the transgression," which could never have resulted from the suffering or the obedience of any mere creature; and, therefore it is, that, unto the Son, the Father saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil

^h Heb. x. 4—7. ⁱ Is. liii. 5. ^j Is. liii. 6. ^k 1 John i. 9.

^l Rom. viii. 3.

^m Heb. vii. 22.

ⁿ Rom. iii. 26.

of gladness above thy fellows.”^o Since, then, “it pleased the Father that in him, ‘the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person,’ should all fulness dwell,”^q as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;”^r since he fulfilled every tittle of the law, and, that he might “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,”^s voluntarily “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;”^t since thus, in HIS DIVINE PERSON, “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other,”^u we see the force and propriety of his declaration to Thomas, “I AM THE TRUTH.”

But, once more, “JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE LIFE.” It was the plain assurance of our Lord to the Jews, though an assurance so remarkable that no created being would have presumed to utter it in his own name and on his own responsibility, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.”^v Little, indeed, did his adversaries, who regarded him as a mere man like themselves, believe the truth of this intimation when “they crucified him,”

^o Ps. xlv. 6, 7. & Heb. i. 8, 9. ^p Heb. i. 3. ^q Col. i. 19. ^r John i. 26.

^s Heb. ix. 26. ^t Phil. ii. 8. ^u Ps. lxxxv. 10. ^v John x. 17, 18.

nevertheless, "he hath fulfilled his word," for, having "said it is finished, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost,"^w "and died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures,"^x having "loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he, 'the Lord of Glory,' should be holden of it."^z Thus was "Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"^a and as the "Prince of Life,"^b who "hath abolished death,"^c affirms that "the hour is coming, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live,"^d we are each of us authorised, through him, to borrow the sublime language of the highly-favoured Man of Uz, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;"^e "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, for, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."^f Now, it was in full confidence that he was one with that God, by whose Spirit

w John xix. 30. x 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. y 1 Cor. ii. 8. z Acts ii. 24.

a Rom. i. 3, 4.

b Acts iii. 15.

c 2 Tim. i. 10.

d John v. 25.

e Job xix. 25, 26.

f 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

he should be raised from the dead, and in the consequent anticipation of the sure accomplishment of his own promise and prediction, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I," being 'in the Father and the Father in me,'^g "will raise it up,"^h that Jesus said unto Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life;"ⁱ and we cannot doubt that, in like manner, his words to Thomas, in my text, include an express allusion to the momentous truth that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth"—but, our Lord adds—"they that have done good, unto the resurrection of LIFE; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of DAMNATION:"^j and so the Apostle teaches, that, "being made perfect," *i. e.*, having glorified his Father upon earth, and finished, in his crucifixion, the work which that Father had given him to do, Christ "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him;"^k and thus says St. Paul, "BELIEVE ON THE Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"^l and "let every one that nameth the name of Christ, DEPART FROM INIQUITY;"^m "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and

g John xiv. 11. h John ii. 19. i John xi. 25. j John v. 28, 29.

k Heb. v. 9. l Acts xvi. 31. m 2 Tim. ii. 19.

worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"ⁿ—and thus admonishes St. James, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"^o—and thus exhorts St. Peter, "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity"^p—and thus declares St. John, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin,"^q and "every man that hath this hope in HIM, purifieth himself, even as HE is pure"^r—and to the same effect is the high testimony of "the Captain of our Salvation"^s himself, who exclaims, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life,"^t but, "if any man come to me, and hate not" (in comparison) "his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and HIS OWN LIFE also, he cannot be my disciple; and whosoever doth

n Titus ii. 10—14.

o James i. 22.

p 2 Peter i. 5, 6, 7.

q 1 John i. 7.

r 1 John iii. 3.

s Heb. ii. 10.

t John vi. 47.

not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple ;”^u “wherefore, if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee ; and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell.”^v Thus it appears, as plain as the Word of God himself can make it, that “without faith it is impossible to please Him,”^w and that “as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”^x

And is this “obedience unto righteousness,”^y which consists in “holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,”^z following “peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord”^a—is this a spontaneous production in “the evil heart” of “the natural man”? “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one,”^b replies Job, in the words, no less of plain reason than of inspired revelation ; and because “the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject” or obedient “to the law of God, neither indeed can be,”^c therefore our church has most justly concluded, that “the condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his

^u Luke xiv. 26, 27. ^v Matt. v. 29, 30. ^w Heb. xi. 6. ^x James ii. 26.

^y Rom. vi. 16. ^z 1 Tim. iii. 9 ^a Heb. xii. 14.

^b Job xiv. 4. ^c Rom. viii. 7.

own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God ;"^d and because "the whole world lieth in wickedness,"^e and all men are by nature "DEAD in tresspasses and sins,"^f therefore must they be "QUICKENED" spiritually in "the hidden man of the heart,"^g before they can be "ALIVE"—as "the children of God," even though they be—"the children of the RESURRECTION."^h

But how are men enabled thus to "yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead ;"ⁱ and by what means comes it to pass, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the tongue confession is made unto salvation ?"^j ONLY—by "looking unto JESUS, the AUTHOR and FINISHER OF OUR FAITH; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,"^k where "he ever liveth to make intercession for us,"^l and where, having "led captivity captive," he "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,"^m and that the "body" of man might become "the temple of the Holy Ghost,"ⁿ "even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father"^o through the Son. "For to

d 10th Article.

e 1 John v. 19.

f Eph. ii. 1.

g 1 Peter iii. 4.

h Luke xx. 36.

i Rom. vi. 13.

j Rom. x. 10.

k Heb. xii. 2.

l Heb. vii. 25.

m Ps. lxxvii. 18. and Eph. iv. 8.

n 1 Cor. vi. 19.

o 1 John xv. 26.

that our Christ both died and rose, and revived,
 that he might be Lord both of the dead and
 living." And since "the last Adam was made
 a quickening spirit," ¹ *for* "as the Father hath
 life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to
 have life in Himself;" ² and since the "Son
 quickened whom he will,"—³ *but* "if any man
 have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,
 and if Christ be in him, the body is dead because
 of sin: but the spirit is life because of righteous-
 ness." Thus is Jesus now, in the day of grace,
 the MORAL RESURRECTION of the SOULS of men,
 by the life-giving energy of his Spirit, no less
 than he will be hereafter, in the day of judgment,
 the ACTUAL RESURRECTION of their BODIES by the
 vivifying power of his voice. And well might
 "He that liveth and was dead, and is alive for
 evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death,"
 affirm to his disciples, "Without ME, ye can do
 nothing," and to Thomas, "I AM THE LIFE."

We have seen, then, that Jesus is "THE
 WAY," not merely—as those men would fain
 persuade, who have never scanned the immensity
 of that great gulf, which individual guilt has
 interposed between even the holiest of mortals
 and the pure kingdom of their sinless God—
 not, merely, because he came to be a pattern
 to them which should hereafter believe on him,

¹ Rom. xiv. 9. ² 1 Cor. xv. 45. ³ John x. 26. ⁴ John v. 21.

⁵ Rom. viii. 9, 10. ⁶ Rev. i. 18. ⁷ John xv. 5.

but, likewise, because “by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place,”^w even into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us,”^x “having OBTAINED eternal redemption for us,”^y when he “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”^z We have seen that Jesus is “THE TRUTH,” not only—as they would fondly teach, who have never learnt that, in the balance of Jehovah, the sceptre of mercy may not outweigh the sword of justice—not only, because he has fully revealed to us “the true God and eternal life;”^a but also, because, being HIMSELF “THE LAMB SLAIN from the foundation of the world,”^b “whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation for our sins, through faith in his blood,”^c he has in his own person on the cross, as the expiatory sacrifice THROUGH “WHOM WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE ATONEMENT,”^d demonstrated to the universe “THAT GOD IS TRUE,” in his essential attributes of JUSTICE and MERCY, INTEGRITY and LOVE. Once more; we have seen that Jesus is “THE LIFE,” not simply—as they would falsely represent, who have never been made conscious of the utter deadness, and darkness, and coldness of the soul of man towards God, until the Spirit of the Father and the Son shall have breathed into it

w Heb. ix. 12. x Heb. ix. 24. y Heb. ix. 12. z 1 Peter iii. 18
a 1 John v. 20. b Rev. xiii. 8. c Rom. iii. 25. d Rom. v. 11.

the breath of life, and light, and love—not simply, because his own resurrection, AS MAN, has proved that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,”^e but, moreover, because “THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN HIM,” AS GOD, “has made us free from the law of sin and death:”^f and, thus, we have seen somewhat of those high, and wonderful, and glorious grounds, upon which our church maintains that NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY JESUS CHRIST, “WHO OF GOD IS MADE UNTO US WISDOM, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION, that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD.”^g

Now, although I am fully aware that it would be superfluous, as regards a large proportion of my present audience, to add any further definition, or refutation, of the doctrines, to which I have alluded as being opposed to the Scriptural view, held by our church, of the method wherein Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; yet, I trust it will be permitted me to bring under the notice of our Brethren of the Laity, THE MODE, THE CAUSE, and THE CONSEQUENCE of the errors, which prevail on this point, in the religious systems, whereupon I have already deemed it my duty to animadvert.

e 1 Cor. xv. 53.

f Rom. viii. 2.

g 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

It is asserted in a well known proverb, that "extremes meet;" and unquestionably, such is the case with respect to Superstition and Rationalism, although the former has presumptuously "added unto," and the latter has sacrilegiously "taken away from," those words of the book of God, which direct man to seek the forfeited favour of his Heavenly Father ONLY through the intervention of that "Mediator of the New Testament,"^h "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."ⁱ

The charge of adding unto God's Word, which I have just adduced against Superstition, is especially applicable to **POPERY**, since she has instructed the members of her communion to invoke Saints, and Angels, and that Virgin Mother whom "all generations shall call blessed,"^j even because **IN HER SEED**, though verily **NOT IN HERSELF**, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."^k Well, indeed do I know, that in sanctioning this invocation, the Church of **RÔME** indignantly abjures the notion that her creed acknowledges "them, which by nature are no Gods,"^l as advocates with "the Majesty on High;" and yet, upon what tenable ground can

^h Heb. ix. 15.

ⁱ Eph. i. 7, 8.

^j Luke i. 48.

^k Gen. xxi. 18.

^l Gal. iv. 8.

she represent them as interceding, not with the Father, but only with the Son? Surely if, on the one hand, the Son be “very God” “of the substance of the Father,”^m then, in his capacity of God, He may be so approached alone, as may even the Father himself, and, therefore no created being can possibly discharge the functions of a Mediator between Him and sinful men; and if, on the other hand, the Son be also very “man of the substance of his mother,”^m then, in his capacity of man—even for our sake, “a man” of human “sorrows, and acquainted with” human “grief”ⁿ—there can be neither need nor place for any interposition of Saint, or Angel, or Virgin, between Him and his people who “are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”^o And, doubtless, these two principles—the first, that we require with the Father, a Mediator, all-perfect in his manhood, all-glorious in his godhead; the second, that we require with the Son, no Mediator whatever save himself—have induced St. John and St. Paul to express themselves as follows: “If any man sin,” says the Beloved Disciple, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:”^p “Seeing then, observes the Apostle of the Gentiles, “that we have a

^m Athanasian Creed. ⁿ Is. liii. 3. ^o Eph. v. 30. ^p 1 John ii. 1, 2.

great high priest, that is passed unto the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,"^q and "in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," and "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them :"^r "let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace" itself, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."^t

But, again, the accusation, alleged against Rationalism, of taking away from God's Word, most manifestly extends to every ramification of of that Socinian scheme, which repudiates altogether any propitiation for sin, and by consequence, denies the existence of a divine Mediator between God and men. Now it is obvious that the truth of these dogmas, if established, must both prove the whole Jewish sacrificial ritual, which had for its grand object the manifestation that "without shedding of blood"—not "the blood of bulls and of goats," but "the precious blood of Christ"—"is no remission"^u of sin; an unmeaning institution,

q Heb. iv. 14, 15.

r Heb. ii. 18.

s Heb. vii. 25.

t Heb. iv. 16.

u Heb. ix. 22.

utterly unworthy, at once the character of God, who so wisely appointed, and of man, who so reverentially observed it; and must also require such mutilation of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alike, as no man can consent to, who does not ignorantly confound KNOWLEDGE with BELIEF, and blindly mistake INTELLECTUAL SIGHT for SPIRITUAL FAITH.

If, however, we proceed to investigate THE "ROOT OF BITTERNESS" from whence these seemingly contradictory errors spring, we shall discover the common, and too prolific, parent of each, in UNACQUAINTANCE with THE DEPTH OF MAN'S DEPRAVITY and with THE HEIGHT OF GOD'S PERFECTION.

Did the disciple of the ROMISH CHURCH correctly estimate the natural degeneracy of his species; did he thoroughly comprehend the force of our Saviour's intimation, "Except a man be born of water and of THE SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"^w and did he accurately mete, in all the fulness of its spiritual as well as literal requirements, that commandment of the Lord, which, in demanding universal holiness both of heart and life, is "exceeding broad"^x—he would have "seen" in the DIVINE, "an end of all" HUMAN, perfection;" and—no longer deeming it possible for either man or angel to surpass, through

^v Heb. xii. 18.

^w John iii. 5.

^x Ps. cxix. 96.

works of supererogation, that measure of bounden duty, which is, always, justly required in its utmost possible extent, from every creature, by the one Supreme Creator; but humbly admitting that, when they have done all which their Maker at once commanded and enabled them to do, they are, at best, “unprofitable servants”—he would conclude, with the Twenty-second Article of our Church, that “The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also Invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

And if the sciolist of the SOCINIAN SCHOOL, who combines, in his own person, the pride of the Pharisee with the scepticism of the Sadducee, were really conscious, on the one hand, of his utter inability to perfectly obey either that “first and great commandment in the law,” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” or “the second,” which is “like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;”^z and if, on the other hand, he were duly aware, that when (referring to the unfailing observance of these pure transcripts of the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God”) Jesus said unto the

y Luke xvii. 10.

z Matt. xxii. 36—39.

captious lawyer, "This do, and thou shalt live,"^a the Judge of quick and dead did, in effect, at the same time pronounce that awful sentence of condemnation, which must attach to as many as "desire to be under" the covenant of the moral "law,"^b "CURSED IS EVERY ONE THAT CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO DO THEM—if, I say, the Rationalist, to what denomination soever he may belong, were thus really conscious of man's utter inability to exhibit, and thus duly aware of God's unalterable resolution to exact, "the beauty of holiness,"^c unblemished by a single "spot or wrinkle"^d of sin, as the indispensable passport of the gates of glory, according to the terms of the covenant of works—then, instead of challenging eternal life as the just reward of his own virtue, he would confess with Jeremiah, "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!"^e and would deprecate the cognizance of his omnipresent God in that sublimely humble language of David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified!"^f—then, so far from regarding his pitiful tears of repentance for the past and his unstable purposes of amendment for the future, as an adequate atonement to the "Holy,

a Luke x. 28. b Gal. iv. 21. c Gal. iii. 10. d 2 Chron. xx. 21.
e Eph. v. 27. f Jer. iv. 1. g Ps. cxliii. 2

Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty,"^h on account of the vast guilt accumulated through omission and commission, through insensibility to the divine love and dishonour to the divine law, he would acknowledge himself to be "by nature the child of wrath, even as others,"ⁱ and would submit himself, with all the unspeakable fervour of adoring gratitude, to be "washed, and sanctified, and justified IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, AND BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD."^j

As, however, the tenets of these anti-scriptural systems have a common cause, so have they, likewise, a common CONSEQUENCE; for it follows from them both, that the path of Christian faith, whereby the wandering prodigal may return to the mansions of his Father's house—the ONLY path, whereof the voice of Jehovah has proclaimed, "THIS IS THE WAY, WALK YE IN IT"^k—is deserted for some other, by which, as being at once the offspring of human perverseness and the parent of human pride, God's holy name is dishonoured, and man's immortal soul destroyed.

To the ingenuous and enlightened mind, however,—capable of appreciating, so far as human infirmity permits, the essential perfections of the Deity and his position as the supreme moral governor, not merely of this world, with its heaven above and its hell beneath, but of the

^h Rev. iv. 8. ⁱ Eph. ii. 3. ^j 1 Cor. vi. 11. ^k Is. xxx. 21.

whole universe of created intelligences—it will be obvious enough, that the immaculate purity of God and the desperate depravity of man, necessarily require the very means of reconciliation, which the divine wisdom has devised, the divine power has furnished, and the divine mercy has approved in the person of Jesus Christ, “to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by” means of his redeemed “church, the manifold wisdom of God :”¹ but to the professed believer—who, being less intelligently “rooted and grounded in love,”^m is more vulnerable by the insidious attacks of those, our adversaries, in whose sight JESUS “has no” SUFFICIENT “beauty” that “they should desire him” ALONE ; or, in whose eyes CHRIST “has no beauty, that” they “should desire him”ⁿ AT ALL—to every such Christian brother, I would repeat, as being “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,”^o our Saviour’s own most striking words, wherein—expressly referring to his MEDIATORIAL CHARACTER, as “THE WAY ;” to his SUFFICIENT SATISFACTION FOR SIN, as “THE TRUTH ;” and to his REGENERATING ENERGY, as “THE LIFE”—He emphatically exclaims, “NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME.”

¹ Eph. iii. 10. ^m Eph. iii. 17. ⁿ 1s. liii. 2. ^o 2 Tim. iii. 15.

And, herein, I am admonished, that it still remains for me to notice, briefly, the last sentence of my text.

Deeply impressed with the vastness and sublimity of the subjects, upon which I have had occasion to touch, as connected with the portion of Scripture before us, I am conscious how feeble has been the attempt to elucidate the full intention of our Saviour in the former part of his address to Thomas; and yet, I would hope that enough has now been intelligibly said, to account for the majestic expression, with which that address is closed. If, therefore, I reassert, that, to the exclusion of every other, "there is ONE MEDIATOR between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"^p who, being "per-God, and perfect man,"^q alone was prevalent to give, and freely "gave himself a ransom for all," because "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,"^r but unto Him, who "hath suffered for us in the flesh,"^s that, "through death, He might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the Devil;"^t if I remind you, that the voice of the Father has thus testified from heaven concerning that anointed one, "who, verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the of the world,"^u "This is my beloved Son, in

p 1 Tim. ii. 5.

q Athanasian Creed.

r 2 Cor. v. 19.

s 1 Peter iv. 1.

t Heb. ii. 14.

u 1 Peter i. 20.

whom I am well pleased;"^v if I repeat, that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him,"^w "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,"^x "and of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace,"^y since "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father;"^z and if I aver, that, BECAUSE THIS IS THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS, THEREFORE, "NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY HIM," my purpose is not to recapitulate the reasons, which, I trust, have been made in some degree apparent during the preceding discussion, for the positive affirmation wherewith our Lord concludes the verse in question—but, my desire is, to imprint upon the minds of us all, an indelible recollection of that solemn, that most important reality, which has been so energetically affirmed by Him, of whom the Holy Ghost bears witness that He is both "the life" and "the light of men,"^a being one with "God that cannot lie;"^b even "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, who raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things

^v Matt. iii. 17. ^w John iii. 34. ^x Col. ii. 9. ^y John i. 16.

^z Gal. iv. 6. ^a John i. 4. ^b Titus i. 2.

under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.”^c

Let, then, the recollection that “NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY” THE SON, WHO, “THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT, OFFERED HIMSELF WITHOUT SPOT TO GOD,”^d obtain a permanent abode, at once in the memory of our minds, and in the memory of our hearts. To our UNDERSTANDINGS, this recollection will furnish a test, wherewith to “try the spirits” of those men, who seek to move us from the stedfastness of our faith in Christ and of our allegiance to his church, “whether they are of God;”^e and it will, at the same time, supply a criterion, whereby we may detect and shun the sophistry of that “deceivableness of unrighteousness,”^f both oral and printed, which daily seeks to delude us into an admission, that the immutable truth of God, as easily consents to the wayward caprice of individual or popular opinion, as the well-poised vane conforms to each changing current of the uncertain wind: and, surely, some such test, and some such criterion are requisite, when that dark Spirit—who himself is “transformed into an angel of light,”^g “that, if it were possible, he may deceive the very elect”^h—has thrown, in ample folds, the specious mantle of liberality,

c Eph. i. 17—23.

d Heb. ix. 14.

e John iv. 1.

f 2 Thess. ii. 10.

g 2 Cor. xi. 14.

h Matt. xxiv. 24.

“FALSELY SO CALLED,” at once over that Heresy, which, **“denying”** the Godhead of **“the Lord that bought them,”**ⁱ would leave us the bond-slaves of Satan, Sin, and Death, and over that Apostacy, which, deeply fallen from **“the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,”** would present us with the pains of penance and the fires of Purgatory, in place of that filial **“service,”** which **“is perfect freedom,”**^k and that full salvation, which is the gratuitous **“GIFT OF GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.”**

But, lastly, as the recollection, of which I am speaking, will thus prove, under God, the best safeguard for our UNDERSTANDINGS FROM every error in doctrine, so will it also prove, through divine grace, the most powerful incentive for our AFFECTIONS TO every excellence in practice. The awakening thought, that **“God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity,”** nevertheless **“so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life”**^m—the affecting remembrance, that **“God commendeth His love toward us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”**ⁿ—will lead us, whilst we humbly cease from **“going about to establish our own righteousness, and thankfully**

i. 2 Peter. ii. 1. j Gal. v. 1. k Second Collect for Peace.

l Habak. i. 13. m John iii. 16. n Rom. v. 8.

submit ourselves unto the righteousness of God,"^o to "love Him, because He first" so marvellously "loved us"^r—and "the love of Christ will constrain us" to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service;"^q "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."^r

Whether, therefore, "our adversary the Devil," solicit us with the delusions of unbelief and of misbelief, on the one hand, or, "with the pleasures of sin,"^s on the other, to "make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience,"^t let memory resist him with that asseveration of Jesus, the glorified Head of the Church, THE ONLY, BECAUSE THE DIVINE SAVIOUR of his mystical body, "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME."

"Now, unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."^u

^o Rom. x. 3. ^p 1 John iv. 19. ^q Rom. xii. 1. ^r 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

^s Heb. xi. 25.

^t 1 Tim. i. 19.

^u Jude xxiv. 25.

THE
Third Centenary of the Reformation Improved;

IN A
DISCOURSE,



THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS DELIVERED IN THE
WESLEYAN-METHODIST CHAPEL,
SALTER-GATE, CHESTERFIELD,

On the Evening of Sunday the 4th of October, 1835,

BY JAMES LOUITT.

"Wherefore dere brother aske and demaūd of your boke, the testamēt of Jesus Christ, in these woful and wretched dais, what you should thiinke, and what you should stay upon for a certayne truth, and what-soeuer you heare taught, trie it hy your boke whether it be true or false."
—*Hooper's Letter, 3d Dec. 1554.*

CHESTERFIELD:

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The following discourse was delivered in compliance with a circular letter from the President of the Methodist Conference (the Rev. RICHARD REECE,) to the Preachers, reminding them that the 4th of October, 1835, was the "third centenary of the printing of the entire Scriptures in the English language," and suggesting the propriety of "commemorating" that event, as it "under God, contributed more than any other means to bring about the Reformation."

And, it is in deference to the wishes of the Chesterfield Leaders' meeting, and many of the congregation, that the author has consented to its publication: he regrets that it is not more worthy of the occasion, and of their acceptance.

Chesterfield, 26th Oct., 1835.

A DISCOURSE,

&c.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”—1 Thess. v. 21.

It is a serious consideration, but one which is compatible with our present probationary state, that ignorance, error, and evil, are ever to be found in the immediate neighbourhood of truth—that the deleterious stream runs fast by the waters of life: it seeks an association with it, by assuming the hue and appearance of truth, and by practising that which St. Paul terms “the deceivableness of unrighteousness.”* To provide against this deception we have the first part of the direction given in the text, “Prove all things;” try or test them as a chemist or refiner would the ore, in order to obtain possession of the unalloyed gold.† And this is imposed on Christians as a solemn duty—an obligation under which we are laid by the God of Truth. Nor is this the only passage in the holy scriptures in which it is inculcated; for it was Paul’s prayer for the Philippians, “That they might approve things that are excellent,”§ or that differ; John’s direction, that those to whom he wrote should not “believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world;”‡ it forms the subject of Christ’s approbation of the church of Ephesus,

* 2 Thess. ii. 10.

† *Δοκιμαζέτω*: a term expressive of the process through which ore passes in its purification. Parkhurst says it signifies “To try, prove, assay, as refiners do metals, by fire.” Lex. p. 141; Ewing, p. 353. The word is of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and is rendered in our version discern, prove, approve, examine, alloweth, try, &c.

§ Phil. i. 10.

‡ 1 John iv. 1.

"Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars;"* and, to say no more, it was by it the Bereans were led to embrace the faith, having "searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so."†

But it is of equal importance, that having found the truth, we "hold it fast." This remaining part of the injunction is necessary, when we keep in mind the deteriorating tendency which is in man, and in all bodies of men. Indeed, had no departure from truth and love ever been experienced, still the premonition of the text would have been in place, and on suitable occasions it would have been properly and fittingly urged. It is, however, the more imperative, when we remember the lamentable departures from truth which past generations have witnessed, and which we now witness, in many parts of the world, professedly christian.

The entire canon may be suitably applied to such as have in "later times" been convinced of a departure "from the faith,"§ and who have happily been brought back to "the truth." And we need not go far to find an instance in point: we have it in the fact of the Reformation of christianity in Great Britain; an event which is surely of sufficient importance to induce British christians, and all who may at any time learn the story, to give heed to the entire exhortation of the text. Protestants should, at proper seasons, dwell on the event in question, with all its instructive history, not to promote and increase a sectarian bigotry, and an uncharitable spirit towards each other, much less an intolerant and persecuting feeling towards those who still differ from them; but so to value that Reformation, and the principal means by which it was effected, as to hold fast the truth which our forefathers thereby recovered—the faith "once delivered unto the saints."‡

The principal means employed in bringing about the Reformation in this island, was the translation of the sacred scriptures of the Old and New Testament into the vernacular language of the country; and as it is just 300 years, this day, since Miles Coverdale, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, finished the printing of what he calls a "special translation,"|| and as this was the first translation of the entire scrip-

* Rev. ii. 10.

† Acts xvii. 11.

§ 1 Tim. iv. 1.

‡ Jude, 3.

|| Ded.

tures which was given us, it has been judged advisable to bring this fact, with the principles involved, and the happy consequences flowing from it, under the notice of Protestants generally. We, my brethren, are not alone in this celebration; for Protestants on the continent of Europe notice the event of the Reformation, at such times as have been the most remarkable in their respective histories of that event.

I have only one thing farther to say, before entering on the discourse itself, and it is this—That in commemorating the event of the Reformation, we are not endeavouring to advocate any particular set of political notions. We engage in this service for the purpose and end of inducing each other to prize the advantages which we at present possess, and of being faithful to those principles of truth and christian conduct which our ever blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath committed, to his church, as a sacred deposit.

To give some plan and form to our thoughts and recollections, I would attempt a short consideration of

I. The state of christianity in Great Britain at the period of the Reformation.

And here, I am not going to carry you back to the time of Cæsar's landing, fifty-four years before the birth of Christ, dwell on the system of Druidism which then reigned, and draw a picture of the idolatry and superstition of those days; nor to notice the state of things, which were not much improved, between the coming in of the Romans and the introduction of christianity—an event which by the bye happened sufficiently *early* to show that we received “the faith of God's elect,”* if not from the Apostles themselves, at least by the instrumentality “of those who had been the disciples of our Lord.” That it was introduced at an early period, Tertullian, who died in the commencement of the third century, and who was then sixty-three years old, testifies. His words are—“Those parts of Britain which were inaccessible to the Romans *are* become subject to christianity;”† and, one who has examined the point with his usual learning and judgment, concludes, “That the gospel was established here, as early as even our traditions state, and very probably, by the *apostles* themselves; or by persons immediately deputed by *them*.”‡ It was

* Tit. i. 1.

† Adv. Jud.

§ Dr. A. Clarke's Introd.

A.D. 430, that Pope Gregory I. sent over Augustine or Austin, with his forty companions, who landed in the Isle of Thanet, in Kent;* so that it was not by the exertions of the see of Rome that we obtained the knowledge of christianity.

We will at once come to the time when christianity had been about 1500 years in this nation. And, since we have fixed on this, as a day of commemoration, let us place our attention on the 4th of October, 1535, as a point of observation—one from which we may be able to form a pretty correct estimate of things. According to what will not be considered an unreasonable expectation, christianity *should* have then appeared in its vigour and native glory, whereas the very reverse of this was the case. The view which all well authenticated history gives, is truly affecting: we have thought of the church of Christ in that day, and have been ready to join in the affecting lament of the ancient prophet over his beloved Zion—"How is the gold become dim! *how* is the most fine gold changed? the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hand of the potter."† Nor can we, at this time, give any thing like a full and complete draught of the state of christianity in Great Britain, although this, with its causes is by no means an unprofitable subject of meditation, but so much only, as is sufficient to show that a *reformation* was most urgently required.

There are *four* things which more particularly give form and character to the church of Christ; and by the state in which they are severally found, at any given time, we may judge of her actual condition.

The *first* is doctrine: and the following may be selected as truths of vital importance in the christian system, namely,

That the *scriptures alone* are sufficient for the ends and purposes of our salvation. "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are *able* to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." And "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect,

* Bode L. i. C. 25.

† Lam. iv. 2.

thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* This is well expressed by the Reformers in the 6th article of the Church of England, "Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." In that age they were by solemn council, ay of the heads of the then professedly christian church, declared insufficient; and that the whole of the will and mind of God, as touching salvation, were *not* there, but had to be supplied by tradition, fathers, councils, and the judgment of the church.

That men are to *search* the word of God, it having been given for that purpose. The law said, "Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them, your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up."† Nor was this to be viewed as an ordinary precept, or one to which small importance was attached; for when Moses had made an end of speaking to all Israel, he again pointed attention to it, saying, "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is for your life."§ Jesus Christ concurs in this sentiment, and enforces the same practice, when he says, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."‡ Up to the period in question, or nearly so, they were in an *unknown* tongue, and therefore could not be read by the bulk of the people; and they were moreover, by the rulers and highest authority of the church, forbidden, on principle, to read them.

That the *merits of Christ* alone can or do avail with God, in the behalf of men, for their present salvation and eternal life. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."|| At the time referred to, the merits of Christ were not denied; but it was said that Mary and the departed saints, also had merit, arising from a superabundance of good works, or, "voluntary works besides, over and above God's commandments." These were

* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. † Deut. xii. 18, 19. § Ib. xxxii. 47.

‡ John v. 39.

|| 1 Cor. iii. 11.

termed “works of supererogation.”* The people were taught that on this account saints could and did mediate and intercede with God in behalf of men, and should of necessity be applied to accordingly ; and we find that as co-mediators they were not only placed by the side of Christ, but in the prayers of many were preferred to Him—at least, took the precedence, the form of the petition being, “To the blessed Virgin and her Son Jesus Christ.”

That men are “accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by *faith*, and not for our own works or deservings;” and this doctrine of “justification by *faith only*, is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.”† This evangelical tenet, is systematically established in the first eleven chapters of the epistle to the Romans, and is thus summed up by him who was “an apostle—not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead”§—“To him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly his faith is counted for righteousness;”‡ and we cannot express our opinion of its importance better than in the words of the great German reformer—“It is the grand doctrine by which a church stands or falls.”|| The then church, notwithstanding, said and declared, that “If any man said so, let him be accursed,” since men were justified, i.e., obtained forgiveness of sin, by *works* as well as *faith*.

That *God only* can forgive sin; and that it is an inherency in the Divine prerogative to exercise and dispense this grace. Even the pharisees thought the contrary to be blasphemy, saying of Christ, “Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?”¶ And so far were the apostles themselves from claiming, in any shape, such power, that, on one occasion, they told their deeply prejudiced and criminal audience, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”** At the time now referred to, the divine prerogative was not denied in the abstract; but it was declared, even as an article

* Art. xiv.

|| Luther.

† Art. xi.

¶ Luke ii. 5; Luke v. 21.

§ Gal. i. 1.

‡ Rom. iv. 1.

** Acts v. 31, 32.

of faith, that *this* power, "the power to forgive *mortal* sin,"* was, in visible exercise, given to the clerical order, as the "second special faculty of the priesthood,"† and actually and apostolically vested in the pretended head of the church: and that therefore *he* could in the legitimate exercise of his vicarship, and in the plenitude of his vicergerency,§ forgive men as often, for what time, and for such causes, as to his ghostly wisdom appeared fit.

That there are *two* sacraments instituted by Christ—baptism and the eucharist; *gospel* ordinances, to be perpetually observed in his church [Matt. xxviii., 19, and 1 Cor. xi., 25, 26,] the one being a sign and seal‡ of an inward grace, and the other, "the shewing forth the Lord's death, till he come again." These are consistent with the simplicity, spirituality, and purity, of the "dispensation of the fulness of times." But to these, there were added *five* sacraments, viz., confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction; and that these additional sacraments "confer grace"—||—a point which was solemnly determined by the council of Florence, in 1439.

That to perform these rites christianly, there must be (besides a fitting disposition of mind in an adult, for,) an external conformity with their prescribed order, viz., in the first, the simple application of water "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and in the second "bread" and the "cup." Farther than this, would verily have been to "turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, and to desire again to be in bondage."¶ The church at that time was not, content with the water in baptism, but added and enjoined canonically the items following: 1. Blessing the water in the font every year on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost; 2. Taking (in the case of an adult) the name of the saint whose virtues they might imitate; 3. Breathing three times on the person to be baptized; 4. Signing him with the sign of the cross; 5. Blessing some salt, and putting a little into the mouth of the baptized, to signify the secret of wisdom and discretion of grace; 6. Exorcism, i.e., the form of abjuration by which evil and malignant spirits were driven away; 7. Touching the nostrils with a

* Preserv. Tit. viii. 44.

† Rhem. Notes. Nov. Test. p. 246.

§ Wilk. Con. t. iii. 271.

‡ Rom. iv. 11.

|| Creed of Pius IV.

¶ Gal. iv. 9.

hute spittle; 6. Anointing on the breast and between the shoulders with oil previously blessed by the bishop. After these preparatory rites, followed the baptism; but still the ceremonies attending it were not over: for there were performed 1. Anointing on the crown of the head with holy chrism; 2. Covering with a white robe; and 3, and lastly, a lighted candle put in the hand of the baptised.

While, however, it thus superstitiously added to the rite of baptism, it unwarrantably took from that of the eucharist, the cup; declaring that the laity should only eat of the bread. This was even decreed in the council of Constance, held in 1414-18, in which there were present, an Emperor, the Pope, twenty Princes, one hundred and forty Counts, more than twenty Cardinals, seven Patriarchs, twenty Archbishops, ninety-one Bishops, six hundred other clerical dignitaries, and about four thousand priests. That assembly granted that Christ instituted and dispensed the eucharist under *both* kinds, and that it was likewise so administered by the primitive church, but for the avoiding some dangers and scandals it prohibited the use of wine to the lay-people. It says, "For although Christ instituted and administered to his disciples, this venerable sacrament under both kinds of bread and wine; and although in the primitive church it was received by the faithful under both kinds; yet notwithstanding, for the avoiding of some dangers and scandals, this custom is, upon reasonable grounds, introduced, that it be received by lay-people under the kind of bread only." "It may be presumed," observes Dr. Stratford, "that the scandals were great, and the reasons weighty that moved the council to make a decree in plain defiance to Christ's institution. I shall therefore mention them, and leave them to the judgment of the reader. John Gerson, who was himself present at the council, in a treatise which he wrote in defence of that decree, tells us what they were: 1. The danger of spilling the wine; 2. The danger in carrying it from place to place; 3. In defiling the vessels (which ought to be kept as sacred things) by being touched and handled by lay-men; 4. In the long beards of the lay-men; 5. In keeping the consecrated wine for the use of the sick; because vinegar may be generated in the vessel, and so the blood of Christ would cease to be there, and pure vinegar would be administered for the blood of Christ. Besides, in summer, flies may be generated, and sometimes it may putrify and become loathsome; and some may

loath to drink of it, because others had drank of it before; 6. Wine would be chargeable, especially in such places where it is scarce. There would be moreover danger of freezing in winter; and there would be farther danger in giving occasion many ways to the people to believe that which is false—as, that lay-men, as to the receiving of the sacrament, are of equal dignity with priests.* You will readily perceive, that it follows, (notwithstanding the decree of the council of Trent, which began to sit in 1545, “that under either kind alone, Christ whole and entire, and the true sacrament is received,”) that where this sacrament is not administered “according to Christ’s ordinance and commandment”† the eucharist is not, and has not been for ages, scripturally observed.

That the elements of bread and wine in the eucharist, remain the same after as before the “giving of thanks;”§ and that the benefit of receiving depends on the “self examination”‡ and the “worthiness”‡ of the receiver. This was then resolutely denied; and it was said that “in the most holy sacrament of the eucharist, there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood; which conversion the catholic church calls *transubstantiation*.”|| And the argument employed to convince people of this, was the figure of speech which Christ made use of in the institution of the rite—“This is my body”¶—“This is my blood,”** for, this *represents*. The principle of “worthily” receiving was changed for one of mere bodily service—the sacrament “conferring grace;” for it was said that since the receiver, by partaking the wafer of bread from the hand of the priest, ate and drank “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he then enjoyed the grace of Christ and partook of his merits.

And—That death by terminating the probation of men, fixes their eternal state: of the righteous, in that being “absent from the body” they are “present with the Lord;” and of the wicked, that they “in hell lift up their eyes:” but it was, at the time in question, taught as gospel, that there were two reasons which prevented, even just men, from

* Gers. Contr. Hær.; Pres. agt. P. vol. i. † Art. xxx. § 1 Cor. xi. 24.

‡ Vs. 28 and 29.

|| Creed of Pius. Sup.

¶ Matt. cvi. 26.

** Ib. v. 28.

at once entering into Paradise: the first, "venial sins," and second, "a debt of vindictive temporal punishment due to mortal sin which had not been atoned for in this world by penances and good works."* These, though not meriting eternal death, required to be expiated;—that there was therefore a region of pain, into which they entered, termed purgatory, because in it the souls of men were purged from sin;—"that the souls therein detained are helped, by the sufferages of the faithful;"† and that their prayers offered through the mediation of Christ and canonized saints, would avail to mitigate, and at last meritoriously extricate the sufferer. These prayers formed an essential part of the service of the mass, and were sold on a regular graduated scale; at least, the priest performing them was paid for the duty in that way.‡

These, then, are some of the corruptions in doctrine. Sterling truth was associated with, and so overlaid by traditions, mysteries, and subtle and destructive explications and unintelligible jargon, that it was made of "none effect."

The second is worship.

This, among any people is guided by, and wholly depends upon the doctrine which they hold. A few particulars will shew this to have been the case, at the period in question. It is essential to the worship of God—

That—because "God is a spirit, they that worship Him, must worship *Him* in spirit and in truth."‡ On this principle we find the second of the ten commandments so expressly forbidding idolatry—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God;" and it is plain from the practice of the primitive church recorded by the earlier fathers, that christians during the first three centuries, and the greater part of the fourth, neither worshipped images, nor used them in their worship:§ whereas the then church had images of God and of his attributes; the Father being represented as an old man, having the Son lying in his bosom, and the Holy Ghost over his head like a Dove.¶

* Ousley, 161.

† Creed of Pius.

‡ See Receipts in M'Gavin's Protestant, 4 v. 8vo.

§ John iv. 24.

¶ Buck. p. 447.

¶ Wes. Works, x. 111.

That *God only* should be worshipped. It was his own command to the Israelites, in reference to the sinners of Canaan, "Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: for thou shalt worship no other God;"* and so much have *christians* been impressed with this, that Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes and ran in among the people of Lycaonia who would have sacrificed to them, and said "Sirs, why do ye these things? we are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God," and when John fell before the feet of the apocalyptic elder to worship him, he said "see *thou do it* not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God:" whereas in those days the church worshipped angels, Mary, and the saints. Indeed, to avoid the awkwardness of a worship so manifestly anti-scriptural, they invented a distinction, saying that that which was offered the creature was DOULIA, reverence or veneration, and to Mary a particular respect, termed hyperdulia—not LATRIA, proper worship. This distinction was "without any authority from scripture, which uses the words promiscuously,"† and was one which, when it came to be explained, people could not apprehend; for the same *acts* of worship which were offered to the creature were offered to God himself, e.g., praying for the remission of sins, the bestowment of favours, &c.

That men are every where to approach God, by and through *one mediator*. There is "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,"§ who is "*the* mediator of the new covenant." This was prefigured and asserted by the fact of there being but one high priest under the law, answering to the reality of the one high priest and mediator of the gospel dispensation. At the time of which we are speaking, the church had as many mediators as there were angels and saints, more especially the Virgin and such holy persons as were canonized. And the people not only drew near to Christ as a mediator and intercessor, but to angels and saints, and that even through the medium of their images, shrines, and relics!

That whatever respect might have been had to *places* before the establishment of the gospel, God is, under it, equally disposed to

* Ex. xxxiv. 13, 14.

† Gal. iv. 8; Rom. i. 25. Wes. Sup.

§ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

hear such as in every place properly call upon Him. It was altogether a Samaritan notion that the worship of God was to be confined to places in the days of the Messiah; and a fit opportunity having occurred, he corrected it, by informing the Samaritan woman, and through her the world at large, that "the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." And again, "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:" Paul says, "I will that men pray every where:" whereas in the first part of the sixteenth century it was taught and believed that certain spiritual blessings could be obtained more fully, freely, and certainly in particular places than in others. This, among a variety of things equally wise and scriptural, gave rise to pilgrimages, which were at one time accounted the most meritorious doings, and extolled accordingly. Out of numerous instances, let me remind you of one which was taken by numbers of professedly christian people to the shrine of the famous Thomas à Becket, in Christ's church, Canterbury. This man having created much uneasiness to his sovereign, Henry II., by his violent and unconstitutional attachment to the principle of the church's supremacy to the state,* lost his life by four of the king's servants, in 1170, but was speedily canonized. The clergy began to set forth his merits, and to urge the people to visit his shrine and obtain the benefit of his good offices in heaven. "For 300 years he was accounted one of the greatest saints, as may appear from the accounts in the ledger books of the offerings made to the three great altars in Christ's church. The one was to Christ, the other to the Virgin, and the third to St. Thomas. In one year there were offered at Christ's altar, £3 2s. 6d.; to the Virgin's altar, £63 5s. 6d.; but to St. Thomas's altar, £832 12s. 3d. The next year the odds grew

* Robert, Earl of Leicester, in communicating the resolution of the King and Barons to Becket, said, "The King commands you to come immediately, and give in your accounts, or else hear your sentence." On hearing which, Becket started upon his feet and exclaimed, "My sentence! No! my son, hear me first. I was given to the church free, and disengaged from all claims, when I was elected Archbishop of Canterbury, and therefore I never will give any account. Besides, my son, neither law nor reason permits sons to judge their father. I decline the jurisdiction of the King and Barons, and appeal to God, and my Lord the Pope, by whom alone I am to be judged."—Holroyd, ii. 27.

greater; for there was not a penny offered at Christ's altar, and at the Virgin's only £4 1s. 8d.; but at St. Thomas's £954 6s. 3d. By such offerings it came that the shrine was of inestimable value. There was one stone offered there by Lewis VII. of France, who came over to visit it (in order to secure the speedy return to health of his only son Philip, who had fallen into a dangerous sickness,) that every body believed the richest in Europe."*

And, That men worship God in a language which they understand. Common sense itself teaches this: "Things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped;"† so that it follows "If I know not the meaning of the voice, he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me."§ Paul resolves therefore "I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by *my voice* I might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." How indeed should the "unlearned say amen" unless he "understandeth" what is said? In that iron age, the whole service of the church, was, by the authority of its rulers, in an *unknown* tongue. Well might the protestant reformers complain of this as a sore evil; and so impressed were they with its utter repugnancy to the best interests of christianity, and its being contrary to the practice of the first ages, that they at once offered to rest the whole controversy with anti-christ on it, and said, that if it could be proved to have been the practice "for the first five hundred years after Christ, we will yield the cause."‡

The *third* is discipline. Proper discipline is of great importance to the peace and prosperity of any society of christians—subordinate only to love itself, and therefore deserves the closest attention. In the primitive church, it was, as it ever should be, eminently simple, free from intricacy, worldly policy, and ambition. A few particulars will shew what was the state of the church in this respect:—

To secure the purity and honour of the ministry, as well as to provide for the maintenance of christian liberty itself, it was of importance to place it on an *equality of order*, no higher being known

* Burn. Hist. Reg. i. 378.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

§ 1 Cor. xiv. 11.

‡ Preserv. i. p. 23.

than the presbyter or bishop of a particular church. It is true that some profess to find in these very words the distinction they maintain; but as a learned professor and judicious biblical critic observes, "One single passage from the apostolical writings has not been produced, in which it appears from the context, that the two terms PRESBYTER and BISHOP, mean different offices."* But having once made a *distinction*, it was not difficult to widen it:† so by degrees (for the thing was done gradually) the bishop or pastor of a particular church, claimed to be the universal bishop, the bishop of bishops, the head of the church on earth, and Christ's vicar; and to this gentleman, it was said, were entrusted the keys of the kingdom—that is, "The authoritie or chaire of doctrine, knowledge, judgment, and discretion between true and false doctrine: the height of government, the power of making lawes, of calling councils, of the principal will in them, of confirming them, of making canons and holesome decrees, of abrogating the contrary, of ordaining bishops and pastors, or deposing and suspending them, finally the power to dispense the goods of the church, both spirituall and temporall."§ This gave rise to a number of other orders, and these, it was said, all derived their official existence from *him*. It was asserted, not even on the very plausible ground of expediency, but as of divine right; and so much was this the doctrine of that day, that our Henry VIII., in his answer to Dr. Luther, defended it. It is true that Sir T. More "desired him to leave it out—but the King would not follow his council."‡ We all know, however, how much he changed his mind on this point!

Again: To uphold the purity and promote the catholicism of the church, it is of importance ever to bear in mind the principles of christian discipleship, and fraternal and brotherly recognition; the one being thus defined, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother;"|| and the other, that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" ¶—*there* is a church or a congrega-

* Campb. Lect. I. 128; King's Enquiry, p. 58; Wes. Wks. ii. 6, and xiii. 218.

† This distinction was the first step to ecclesiastical preferment."—Hare's Eccl. Claims. P. 2. p. 556.

§ Rhem. Notes 81, 82.

|| Matt. xii. 50.

‡ Burn. Sup. 550.

¶ 1b. xviii. 20.

tion of believing men." Then, it was even a matter of faith, that such as were not in visible connexion with the head aforesaid, were guilty of schism, and were by the sentence of that church "accursed," since there was no salvation out of her pale.

Farther: It is required of the disciples of Jesus Christ, that to promote and extend the faith, throughout the world, they employ no "carnal weapons,"* but those of truth and love, which are "mighty through God." Then, however, it was forms and ceremonies, in and under which the truth lay concealed, and buried in a superstition and idolatry, which out-paganed paganism; and not always by such means, but often by the sword of the magistrate itself.

And—not to proceed farther in this detail of corruption—solemn separation from the church was from the days of the apostles, the only length to which the societies of christians went in the exercise of discipline: *here* the offender was left in the hands of Christ, to deal with him as He saw fit. Now the sword of the magistrate was, as it had been for ages, called in, and the offending brother was subject to all manner of civil indignity, and even to the loss of life. It is said, that through the exercise of this nefarious principle, more hereticks were murdered than even men were slain in the wars of Europe! And thus the successors of Peter were forward to follow him in "having a sword and drawing it,"† who attended not to the standing direction of Jesus Christ, "Put up thy sword into the sheath:‡ for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." §

It only now remains that we glance at the state of the church, in respect of *practice*. And I need scarcely say that the *lives* of the professors of christianity, (with a few noble exceptions, "of whom the world was not worthy,") answered to her doctrine, worship, and discipline. All the writers of that day—all correct sources of information bear witness to the gross corruption of priest and people. One or two testimonies shall suffice: Nicholas de Clemangis says, "Wicked persons did so much abound in all professions of men, that scarce one among a thousand was to be found who did sincerely live, answerable to their profession, and if there was one that was honest, chaste, and frugal, and did not follow this lewd kind of life, he was

* 2 Cor. x. 4.

† John xviii. 10, 11.

§ Matt. xxvi. 52.

made a laughing stock to others, and was presently called, either an insolent or singular madman, or an hypocrite:"* and no wonder, says Stratford, "That all flesh had corrupted their ways, when the lives of the clergy, which should have been the salt of the world, were themselves more corrupt and unsavoury than those of the laity."† He continues—"But really the catalogue of their vices of all sorts of clergy is so shocking, that I must say in the language of the Duke of Bavaria's ambassador to the council of Trent, that 'the cause of the evils that were arisen among them was the bad life of the clergy, whose wickedness was so great, that he could not relate it, without offending the chaste ears of the auditory.'"§ And, in a word, Dr. Mosheim observes, that "The most eminent writers of this century (XVth) unanimously lament the miserable condition to which the church was reduced, by the corruption of its ministry, and which seemed to portend nothing less than its total ruin, if Providence did not interfere by extraordinary means for its deliverance and preservation.‡ Nor is all this to be much wondered at, when we attend to the then frame-work of the church: It was founded on the ignorance of the people; fostered the very principles which it should have checked; and was, in all its superstitious offices, the never failing source of wealth to an ignorant, ambitious, and immoral priesthood. So that the tale is soon told: christianity was never more corrupt, ministers and people never more unholy, and the clergy never more wealthy.

Did not this state of things demand Reformation, or something of the extraordinary means of recovery to which Mosheim refers?—It demanded "extraordinary" means, whatever they might be, for this cogent reason, that the church, in addition to her other enactments and decreeing, declared herself, after all, "*Infallible*." There was no expectation or hope of a change for the better from *within*, but of necessity to *apparently* violate order in effecting it. Bishop Burnet, in stating and answering the prejudices which some might entertain against the Reformation, observes on this point, that "a general concurrence is a thing much to be laboured for; but when it cannot be had, every bishop must then do his duty so as to be answerable to the chief bishop of souls."|| And the means resort-

* De Corrupt. Stat. Eccles. † Preserv. i. 30. § Hist. Coun. of Trent. lib. 6.

‡ Ecc. Hist. Cent. xv.

|| Hist. Sup. pref. vol. ii.

ed to was a *Reformation*—not the destruction of the gold of the sanctuary, but its purification. In a neighbouring kingdom, vice and infidelity fastened their attention on the same withering superstition which had been there grafted on christianity; and not being able (for how could they!) to see farther than the surface of things, concluded, as they are wont to do, that there was nothing in the religion of Jesus itself, but priestcraft; renounced the scriptures, embraced atheism, denied the resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul, as well as a future state of rewards and punishments; contemned the sacred obligations of morality and religion, and became in a moment steeped in crime and blood. This was Liberty! The pyramid stood on its point—and the nation reeled to and fro, and “staggered like a drunken man.” Very different was the course taken by our forefathers: they saw and steadily maintained, that what was wanted, was not the destruction of christianity, God’s best gift to man, but its reformation; and they set themselves to effect it accordingly.

But how great was the task! who could contemplate the prospect of attacking Satan in his seat, without, at least personally, fearing the result? This was a war with superstition, bigotry, prejudice, wealth, titles, honour, pagan (termed classic) learning, manifold influence, and sin in a thousand serpentine shapes. It required the hand of David to snatch the lamb from the lion and the bear, and *his* to fell Goliath of Gath. The sling and the stone were employed indeed; so were the instruments in this work—chosen from the brook itself; but the glory of that work belongs to Him “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Let us now advert to,

II. The principal means by which the Reformation was effected. These were,

1. The labours of godly zealous men. Among the first were the Vaudois from the Valleys of Piedmont, in the South of France. Innocent III. having raised a persecution against them, and on the ground of their being hereticks, applied the sword to reduce them to the faith, numbers fled, and sought refuge in other countries. Those “that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word,” preparing the way in many parts of Europe, and especially in Great Britain, for what followed; and gave illustrious evidence of steadfast suffering for Christ’s sake, in their opposition to that church

which sought to change and subvert the religion which they had received from the earliest period of christianity, and to deprive them of their christian liberty. This testimony for Christ they bore in the darkest period of the western church—their very public seal being a candle surrounded with clouds which seek to envelope it, having as the motto, "Light shining in darkness." But let us hear I. R. Peyran, late pastor of Bonaret and moderator of the Waldensian church, speak on this stirring fact—"The baying of the blood-hounds of the inquisition was heard in our valleys, before you knew its name. They hunted down some of our ancestors, and pursued others from glen to glen, and over rock and mountain, till they obliged them to take refuge in foreign countries. A few of these wanderers penetrated as far as Provence and Languedoc, and from them were derived the Albigeuses or hereticks of Albi. The province of Guienne was then in your possession. From an English province our doctrines found their way into England itself, and your Wickliffe preached nothing more than what had been advanced by the ministers of our valleys four hundred years before his time."*

There was then our own Dr. John de Wickliffe, usually termed "the morning star of the Reformation." He was born in Wickliffe, Yorkshire, about 1324, was divinity professor in Oxford, and afterwards rector of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, who by his translation of the New Testament (for he was the first who translated it into English) and by his other works, in all said to amount to not less than two hundred volumes, assisted greatly in bringing about the Reformation. Wickliffe was persecuted in life and death. Even 41 years after his decease the council of Constance ordered "all his books to be called in, condemned, and burned, together with his bones;"† but his doctrine and spirit remained. His disciples were distinguished by the name of "Lollards," which, in the vulgar tongue of the ancient Germans, denotes a person who is continually praising God with a song. Those, therefore, who aspired after a more than ordinary degree of piety, and for that purpose were more frequently occupied in singing hymns of praise than others, were

* Hist. Brit. Mus., p. 78.

† This sentence was absolutely executed, in 1383. His remains were disinterred, then burnt, and the ashes cast into the Swit, a streamlet which runs by Lutterworth. Hist. Eng. 324.

in the common popular language called Lollards. But the priests and monks being exasperated against these good men, propagated injurious suspicions of them, and endeavoured to persuade the people that innocent and beneficent as the Lollards appeared to be, they were in reality the contrary, being tainted with the most pernicious sentiments of a religious kind, and secretly addicted to all sorts of vice. Thus, by degrees, it came to pass, that any person who covered heresies or crimes under the appearance of piety, was called a Lollard.* Their evangelical labours were abundant, and so rapidly did they increase, that a contemporary historian of the best credit affirms, that more than one half of the people of England became Lollards.†

Then there was Dr. Martin Luther, who on the 31st October, 1517, published his 97 propositions, discussing copiously the doctrines of penitence, charity, indulgences, and purgatory, which were affixed to the church adjacent to the castle of Wittenberg. This act engaged him in a contest with Tetzel, which ultimately led to a separation from the church. He proceeded to expose the corruptions of that day, and his numerous publications were spread over the greater part of western Europe. Of all his antagonists the most considerable was Henry VIII., who wrote a defence of the seven sacraments, &c. This work you may judge "was magnified by the clergy as the most learned work which the sun had ever seen; the writer was compared to King Solomon, and to all the christian emperors that had ever been: and it was the chief subject of flattery for many years, besides the glorious title of *defender of the faith*, which Clement VI. bestowed on him for it. Luther was not at all daunted, but valued himself upon it that so great a king had entered the lists with him."§

Were it necessary, this catalogue of worthies could be easily increased, from the continent as well as from England and Scotland. It has been said that these men had their failings; and it may appear to us, who look on at this distance of time, and under such altered circumstances, that they did not in every instance choose the best point of attack, or that they wasted their strength on inferior points; but let it be remembered that they had to meet error, superstition, cupidity, and vice, in every variety of form; that they were after all, truly

* Mosch. c. xiv.

† Townley, i. 221.

§ Burn. i. 50.

christian men ; were right in fixing on those corruptions which they so successfully attacked ; that they raised the right *standard* of truth, the word of God ; and that they were eminently fitted for, and greatly contributed to bring about that new and christian state of things which we this day see, and in which we rejoice.

2. The invention of printing. This was another species of the agency to which we refer. By it the copies of any work are endlessly multiplied. The art is said to have been invented at Mentz, by Guttemberg and Faustus, in the year 1440, the first printed books extant bearing the date 1450. About 1474, a printing press was set up in Westminster, by Caxton. The advantages resulting to christianity by this invention, are thus described by John Fox, the martyrologist :—" Hereby tongues are known, knowledge groweth, judgment increaseth, books are dispersed, the scripture is seen, the doctors be read, stories be opened, times compared, truth discerned, falsehood detected, and with finger pointed, and all through the benefit of printing ;" * and so much was the influence of the press felt, that the abettors of things, as they then were, violently opposed it, and said with the Vicar of Croydon, in a sermon which he preached about that time at St. Paul's cross, " We must root out printing, or printing will root out us."

3. The favourable interference of the civil power. One or two facts from our own national history will explain my meaning. It appears from undoubted records, that the Kings of England had never admitted all the claims of the see of Rome, though they had in principle, and to a large extent in practice, admitted the supremacy. This, however, with the exactions, claims, exceptions, jurisdictions, immunities, privileges, and such things, amounted to a power which, when fully developed, *did* interfere with the proper exercise of the civil authority ; and this clashing occasioned perpetual collision : but so far was even Henry VIII., in 1522, from denying the principle, that he wrote his book against Luther, and, in a memorable instance, appealed to Rome. Henry had, in his youth, reluctantly married Catharine of Arragon, the widow of his brother Arthur. To this the bishop of Rome had consented ; but after some time had elapsed, Henry's old scruples revived, and he applied to Clement for a divorce

* Acts and Mon. i. 537.

on the ground of consanguinity. The court of Rome delayed to give any judgment in the affair, when Cranmer, (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, but then a private divine,) recommended the King to make his appeal elsewhere—to obtain the judgment of the christian world on the point, and act on it. This he did; and, in 1530, the learned men of Europe, with few exceptions, declared for the King. But still that prince was reluctant to act on this judgment, on account of his previous profession of faith, as well as on political grounds; yet this appeal was of itself a decisive step. The court of Rome still delayed, and the whole seemed to rest on the late of a few days. Impatient of delay, the King acted on the judgment which he had obtained, and married Anne Boleyn, who, with Dr. Cranmer, greatly promoted the Reformation. One occurrence led to another on the important points of supremacy and jurisdiction, until the 28th March, 1534, when the authority of the Bishop of Rome (this being declared to be the great source of the corruption of christianity,) was set aside, and all connexion with him dissolved.

Henry died in 1547, and was succeeded by his son, Edward VI. With the assistance of Cranmer and others he greatly promoted the principles of the Reformation, by stopping persecution, encouraging a more rational and scriptural devotion than that to which the people had been accustomed, and favouring the circulation of the scriptures. He died universally regretted in 1553, and was succeeded by his half sister *Mary*. She was a papist; and, one of the first acts of her reign, was to repeal the statutes of Edward VI. which favoured protestantism. While she encouraged the old religion, she persecuted to the death those who differed from her. In this reign, which was happily a short one, the reformers suffered greatly; and on account of the extent to which the magistrate drew his sword in religious matters, she is emphatically designated “bloody Mary.”

She died in 1558, and was succeeded by Elizabeth, who met her parliament for the first time in 1559. That parliament re-enacted all the statutes of Edward the VIth for the furtherance of the Reformation; and succeeding princes who have sat on the British throne, have in general kept in this tract, until the crown is, by act of parliament, and the weight of the coronation oath, “Protestant.”

4. The sufferings of protestants. Take, for example, the Vaudois. 2,000,000 are said to have perished, through the persecution of In-

nocent, in the twelfth century, because of their attachment to the scriptures and their own ecclesiastical discipline.

Let us pass on to the days of Henry VIII., and instance two—Tindale and Patrick Hamilton. The former “having imbibed the principles of the Reformation, not only endeavoured to propagate them, but in 1526 printed and published the New Testament in English. This, with his other works, brought on him the vengeance of the clergy: he was seized at the house of his friend Poyntz, in Antwerp, and being ecclesiastically condemned as an obstinate heretic, was, according to the loving fashion of that day, handed over to the secular ruler, with the grossly hypocritical recommendation (the same which was given to the mayor and sheriffs of London, in the case of Sir W. Sawtre, the first martyr for the crime of heresy, in England, A.D. 1401,) ‘that the sentence may be so moderated as to prevent danger of death.’” In 1536 he was strangled, near the castle of Vilvorden, and died, calling out in his last moments, “Lord, open the eyes of the King of England,” after which his body was reduced to ashes.

Hamilton was abbot of Fern, and by birth a Scotchman. He had “travelled in Germany, and falling in familiarity with Luther, Melancthon, Francis Lamberd, and other learned men, was by them instructed in the knowledge of true religion; in the profession whereof he was so zealous as he was resolved to come back into his country, and communicate the light he had received into others.”* The state of things there, were such as to demand reformation:—“The monastries were corrupted, the whole ecclesiastick state infected, and ignorance and impiety every where prevailed.” Hamilton spared not “to lay open the corruptions of the church, and to show the errors crept into the christian religion; but the clergy grudging at this, under colour of conference, enticed him to the city of St. Andrews, where they basely and treacherously condemned and delivered him to the secular judge.” That same day he was led to the gate of Salvatore’s college to suffer: giving his gown, bonnet, and coat to his servant, he said to him, “I have no more to leave thee but the ensample of my death, which I pray thee bear in mind. For albeit the same be bitter, and painful in man’s judgment, yet it is the entrance to

* Spotswood, l. i. p. 60—64.

everlasting life, which none can inherit which denieth Christ before this congregation." When tied to the stake, and a quantity of coals, wood, and other combustibles heaped about him, and the fire kindled, he was heard to say, "How long, O Lord, shall darkness oppress this realm? How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of man?" And then closed his speeches with these words—"Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

In the reign of Mary 800 persons were martyred, besides 60 who died in prison; 284 of the honoured names of whom, have been preserved. It was then, that Bishops Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper suffered. Ridley and Latimer were burnt in Oxford, on the 16th of October, 1555. When Ridley was stripped and the faggots were about him, he said, "O heavenly Father, I give thee thanks for that thou hast called me to be a professor of thee even to death. I beseech thee, O Lord, have mercy upon this realm of England." Turning to Latimer, "he embraced him, and bad him be of good comfort; for, said he, God will either assuage the heat of the fire, or give us strength to endure it with patience."

But what was the issue of this suffering for Christ's sake?—The Vau-
dois were scattered: "in tears they sowed the precious seed," and in our own land it sprang up, and "bare fruit unto perfection." Tindale fell, but his works survive. Hamilton was cut off in the prime of his days, but "his patience and constancy stirred up such compassion in the beholders, as many of them doubted not to say that he suffered innocent, and was indeed a martyr for Christ; and, in the University itself, was left so deep an impression of his doctrine, as could not afterwards be extinguished."* Latimer looked cheerful, and after he had prayed, said to Ridley, "Brother, be of good comfort, and play the man; for, by God's grace, we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be put out."—"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

5. The wrath of man. In reference to this fearful moral element, it is a law of the divine government, that "the wrath of man shall praise God: the remainder of wrath shall He restrain;"† and thus if it rage, unwillingly and unwittingly, it shall praise Him, and if restrained, his hand is visible in that sovereign act.

* Spots. Sup.

† Ps. lxxvi. 10.

The entire history of the Reformation, and, indeed, of christianity, furnish proofs of this. Did the persecutions of the Reformers, the suppression of their works, or the intensity of their torture—prevent the spread of truth? One of the statutes of Henry V. was, “that whatsoever they were that should read the scriptures in the mother tongue (which was then called Wickliffe’s learning), should forfeit land, cast, lif, and goods, from their heyres for ever, and so be condemned for heretykes to God, enemies to the crowne, and most arrant traitors to the lande.”* Did even this bary it? No! no more than it put a total eclipse on the orb of day.—“I would ye should understand that the things which *happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”†

6. The translation and circulation of the scriptures into the vernacular language.

After the conversion of the Saxons to the christian faith, “we are sure they had the Bible in their own character and tongue, and that the four gospels in the same, were read in their religious assemblies;”‡ and in the eighth century, “the whole, or a considerable part of the scriptures were read in the public service of the church in a language which the people understood;”† but from the eighth to the fourteenth century, the word was fulfilled, “Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people;” for during a period of five or six hundred years they were not permitted to read the word of God.

In the fourteenth century the morning star arose—Wickliffe having completed his translation from the *Latin*, in 1380. We are told that when a motion was made in the House of Lords, in 1390, for suppressing it, the Duke of Lancaster, the King’s uncle, said—“We will not be the dregs of all, seeing other nations have the law of God, which is the law of our faith, written in their own language;” at the same time, declaring in a very solemn manner, “That he would maintain our having this law in our own tongue against those, whoever they might be who first brought in the bill.” The Duke was ably seconded by others, who said, that “if the gospel, by its being translated into English, was the occasion of men’s running into error, they might know that there were more heretics to be found among

* Col. of St. Trials, p. 48.

† Phil. i. 12.

§ Lewis, p. 4.

‡ Ib. 10.

the Latins than among the people of any other language; for that the Decretals reckoned no fewer than sixty-six Latin heretics."

In very deed however, "the dragon was wroth with the woman;"* and the truth gained ground but slowly. It was not until 1526 that Tindale presented great Britain with the New Testament, *printed* (at Antwerp) in the English language, and translated from the original Greek. His reason for undertaking this work is worthy of notice: viz. that "he had perceived by experience how that it was impossible to establish the lay-people in any truth, except the scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue."

After this "the word of God was not bound." Between 1526 and 1535, a period of only nine years, there were eleven editions of this New Testament, (some of which consisted of 2 or 3000 copies) and in that time also, translations were made of several parts of the Old Testament, by Tindale and others.

And this brings us to Miles Coverdale. He also was born in Yorkshire, in 1484, was first an Augustine monk, but afterwards embraced the principles of the Reformation. Finding himself in danger of being burnt for his religious profession, he fled beyond sea, and applied himself to the study and translation of the holy scriptures. He accomplished his object, and dedicated his English translation "unto the most victorious Prynce and our most gracyous Soverayne Lorde, Henry the viii., Kynge of Englande," &c.; and it is just 300 years THIS DAY since he completed the printing of his work, and gave that invaluable present to his own nation. In his last page he says, "Prynted in the yere of our Lorde M.D.XXXV, and fynished the fourth day of October." It is generally believed that the work was printed at Zürich, by Christopher Froschover, and was the first entire translation of the Bible from the original into the English language. "Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee."

We need not go farther in this particular: the foundation of future translations was laid; and the "sword of the spirit which is the word of God," was unsheathed, and the scabbard thrown away. "Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the king's enemies."

And, 7. Revivals of experimental religion.

Here I am sorry I cannot refer you to such as took place

and so far condemned. In addition to this general consideration, there were then acknowledged as protestant principles—

1. The necessity of a *standard* of christian truth, and that this standard is to be found in the holy scriptures. Bearing in mind our own ignorance, our liability to err, and the deteriorating tendency before referred to, we cannot but acknowledge that in matters which involve our salvation, there should be some universal and infallible standard, to which, on all occasions, an appeal may be made. This the wisest of the heathens have seen and acknowledged. But where was such a standard to be found? The professors of christianity, in Western Europe, and others, had laid it down as an indisputable principle, that it was in the judgment of the church, and that that church was their own. Here was a circle indeed! On this plea of her infallibility, it was said that she had not done, nor could she do wrong; and therefore did not stand in need of being reformed. The Reformation, however, acknowledged that “general councils may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God;” and that “the church of Hierusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith;” and the infallibility of one being successfully disputed, the claim of any other was renounced. The standard (for be it ever remembered that there *is* one) is then to be found in the revelation of the Old and New Testament; in “scripture, understood reasonably and consistently with the context.” By this principle the Bible, which had been neglected for ages, was raised, like the sun in the heavens, to its proper station—the light of truth. The reformers have left us a monument of their judgment on this point, in the sixth article of the church of England, already referred to. The church of Scotland says, “The whole council of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from scripture, unto which no thing at anytime is to be added, whether by new revelations of the spirit, or traditions of men.” This is that standard to which the professedly christian world has yet to come, and to which, we trust, it is fast advancing.

2. That this standard must be *accessible*. While the infallibility of a particular church was in vogue, care was taken to keep the scrip-

tures from the "lay-people;" and the reasons assigned for this step are surely frivolous: such as, that "Christ had entrusted it with the clergy and doctors of the church that they might minister it to the laity and weaker sort, according to the exigency of the times and their several occasions;" and that, to quote the words of the Rev. H. Knighton, one of Dr. Wickliffe's opponents, "The translations were full of errors, and would breed divisions." No logic can now prevent men seeing through these things; and the principle of accessibility, which was established at the Reformation, and which is now in operation in Great Britain, will, whatever bulls or decretals there may be to the contrary, soon be fully acted on in the christian, as it begins to be in the hitherto heathen, world.

3. The right of *private* judgment in things purely spiritual. The scriptures inculcate reverence for, and submission to, the magistrate in civil matters; but, with the same breath, they set before us our duty to God. Of these duties, as mutually existing in the same persons, we have examples:—Daniel was "preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the King thought to set him over the whole realm;"* and the men who envied him, said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Why, then, was he cast into the den of lions? Because that in spiritual things, he exercised the right of private judgment. Again: The holy apostles were "laid hands on, put in the common prison,"* and afterwards "beaten," not for any disloyalty or want of submission to the magistrate, in things properly pertaining to his office, or for preaching doctrines inimical to social order, but solely for differing with him in matters of religion; for when they had been beaten, "they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

But, what, if the magistrate be christian? What, indeed! Was he not professedly so, at, and for ages before the Reformation? And yet so far was this from really altering the case, that we find one who was termed "Defender of the Faith," writing against Luther, burning many of the Protestants, and his successor (Mary) committing Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper, to the flames. The reformers held the right of private judgment in spiritual things when

* Dan. vi. 3.

† Acts v. 18.

each particular bishop did. "his duty, so as to be answerable to the chief bishop of souls;" and, by acting on it, the Reformation was brought about. In that memorable event we are to look for a practical illustration of this principal, which is, to quote the words of Locke, "Every man's natural right, equally belonging to dissenters as to themselves, as no body ought to be compelled in matters of religion, either by law or force. The establishment of this one thing (he observes) would take away all ground of complaints and tumults, upon account of conscience."*

And 4. That the fall, rise, and conservation of a christian church depend on the attention or non-attention which is paid to the scriptures.

Her *fall* in doctrine, worship, discipline, spirit, and practice, is occasioned by a departure from the word of God. Proof of this is not wanting: what but it occasioned the vitiated state of christianity in Great Britain from the seventh to the fourteenth century? If we step from this country to any other, it matters not where, in which we find the christian or any other religion professed, and an authority different to that of the scriptures acted on, we shall there find "confusion and every evil work."

It is equally true that the *rise* of a church depends mainly on a return to the word of God. Instance in the case of the Jews, when they came out of Babylon. They had sinned: their sin consisted in a departure from the law, and their recovery depended on a return to it. Accordingly "a pulpit of wood"† was made for Ezra the scribe, on which he stood, and "opened the book of the law in the sight of all the people, (for he was above all the people,) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, amen, amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with *their* faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Iamin, Akkab, Shebbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Asariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place." The consequence was, that the people "wept when they heard the words of the law," nor was this a momentary feeling, for the issue was, the Reformation of the Jewish church.

* Wks. vi. 48.

† Neh. viii. 4.

At, and before, the Reformation, the adversary was most urgent to refer us to what he termed the fathers, and the uniform consent of the church ; but, while the reformers did not disparage their writings, or undervalue the testimony of antiquity, they protested, that "antiquity and fathers, traditions and councils, canons and the church, lose their authority when they depart from sober reason and plain scripture ;" and therefore betook themselves to the scriptures, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," as being "the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice."* Milton, objecting to antiquity being the rule of faith, says, "I cannot think that either God or nature, either divine or human wisdom, did mean they should ever be a rule or reliance to us in the decision of any weighty or positive doctrines ; for, certainly, every rule or instrument of necessary knowledge that God hath given us, ought to be so in proportion as may be wielded, and managed by the life of man, without penning him up from the duties of human society. But he that shall bind himself to make antiquity his rule, if he reads but part, (besides the difficulty of the choice) his rule is deficient and unsatisfying. For there may be other writers, of another mind, which he has not seen ; and if he undertakes all, the length of man's life, cannot extend to give him a full and requisite knowledge of what was done in antiquity. Go, therefore, and use all your heart, apply your sledges, your levers, and your iron crows, to heave your mighty Polyphemus of antiquity to the delusion of novices and unexperienced christians."† The reformers, standing on the Protestant rule of faith and practice, were able to expose every deviation from truth and right ; experienced it to be "quick and powerful ;" and by it rekindled the expiring lamp of the church of God.

And her *conservation* depends on this. In whatever quarter or corner of the earth we find the "remnant according to the election of grace," we find it existing, and sustaining itself in close connection with gospel truth. The Vandois, before referred to, are in evidence. Their principle, as ascertained and condemned by the council of Tholouse, in 1228, was, that the "holy scripture is the rule of Christian faith ; and that the reading and knowledge of it is free and necessary to all men, to the people as well as to the clergy." Their

* *Rules of the Church of England*. Wm. Wile, viii. 270.

† *Ivanov's Life*, p. 35.

practice accorded with their principle; for even their children could read and repeat whole chapters from the Old and New Testament. Thus the candle of *that* church shone in the midst of the night which was hanging over Europe, and their valleys thereby became "the refuge, and once almost the solitary seat of our common Christianity."*—"O, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy law."

The Reformation was moreover the instrument of conferring inestimable benefits. Let us briefly attend to a few:

One is—a juster sense of religious liberty. At the time referred to, there was no liberty either of choice or profession. The church in this island (which was but a section of the universal church, and that too a corrupt section,) affected to give men liberty in matters of religion; but when this liberty came to be explained and acted on, it amounted to nothing more than to believe as the church did: she proudly anathematizing, excommunicating, and delivering to destruction, all who differed from her. And the doing this was termed charity!

Even when things were in some respects altered, and the magistrate stepped into the supremacy and headship of the church, the same line of policy was pursued towards those who differed from him;† and thus papists burnt protestants, and protestants burnt papists—yea even (tell it not in Gath!) protestants took away the lives of protestants. But "time makes more converts than reason:" for from the days of Henry VIII. many prejudices have been removed, dissenters have increased, and a people have arisen who, though not properly dissenters, must stand, and claim to stand, on the same great principles of christian liberty. God has inclined the heart of the magistrate, so that the doctrine of toleration (if *that* word must still be retained) is at present perhaps better understood than at any former period; the only civil restriction in England on the public worship of such as do not actually assemble in the parish church, being "the oaths and declaration" referred to in 52 Geo. III., which are to be taken "when required thereto by any one justice of the peace,

* Meth. Mag. 1826, p. 823.

† Burn's Ecc. Law, i. pref.

by any writing under his hand or signed by him," and the registration of the place as a "congregation or assembly for religious worship of protestants:" so far, therefore, we sit "every man under his vine and under his fig tree."

A second is—The promotion of catholic charity. As "there is scarcely any expression which has been more grossly misunderstood, and more dangerously applied than this,"* it will be well to observe, that it is not "speculative latitudinarianism. It is not an *indifference* to all opinions: This is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being 'driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine,' is a great curse, not a blessing: an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend to true catholicism. A man of a truly catholic spirit has not now his religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun, in his judgment concerning the main branches of christian doctrine." In what then does genuine catholicism consist? Not, "in your being of my opinion; nor in your embracing my modes of worship. What then? Why, Love me; and that not only as you love all men—your enemies or a stranger, but with a very tender affection, as a friend that is closer than a brother; as a brother in Christ, and fellow citizen of the new Jerusalem, a fellow soldier engaged in the same warfare under the same captain of our salvation." Love me "with the love described in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Commend me to God in all thy prayers. Provoke me to love and to good works. Love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth." Two things should be observed with regard to what has now been spoken: "The one, that whatsoever love, whatsoever spiritual or temporal assistance, I claim from him whose heart is right, as my heart is with his, the same I am ready, by the grace of God, according to my measure to give him: The other, that I have not made this claim in behalf of myself only, but of all whose heart is right towards God and man, that we may all love one another as Christ hath loved us." When we see christians of different denominations, not indifferent to truth, but so far waving what is, after all, confessedly minor matters, as to let love reign, and the "branch run over the wall," we exclaim "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." O thou God of love! grant that *this* love may more and more prevail, until "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the

* Wes. Wks. v. 501.

asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den."

A third is—The triumphant spread of Divine truth. We have seen that one leading principle of the Reformation was, the circulation of the scriptures in the vernacular language: it was on the ground of the Bible containing the whole of God's will, and being sufficient to guide his church,* that the scriptures were translated by Wickliffe. We need not enumerate the translations and editions which were made and published in England, between 1535 and 1611, the date of King James's Bible, which is the present authorized version, but just remark that there were about 324 impressions of the whole or part of the scriptures, besides those made in Scotland and Ireland. So that the number of copies put in circulation in that period, and from 1611 to 1800, were, although inadequate to the growing wants of the people, very great. Still the principle, of the sacred scriptures being read in the various languages and dialects of the earth, was but little thought of, and not formally acted upon until 1804. It was then, that "the idea having been originated of a Bible society for Wales, the thoughts followed in quick succession in Mr. Hughes's mind—'Why not a Bible society for the kingdom?—Why not for the world?' "† Such an institution was accordingly established; and in the short space of thirty years, its results have been beyond calculation, especially in two respects:—In the number of translations which it has directly or indirectly called into existence; and the amount of copies of the scriptures which it has distributed. It appears that from the first publication of the gospel to the year 1440, the Bible had not been translated into more than forty languages and dialects, and of these, several had ceased to be vernacular. On the invention of printing, and especially at the era of the Reformation, translations were increased. Yet, up to 1800, the versions of the whole or part of the scriptures had not reached seventy, of which number more than ten had ceased to be vernacular; so that in 1800 it was not in more than sixty languages and dialects. The society for the wants of the world, was instituted in 1804, and it has already re-printed 44; re-translated 5; translated and circulated, in whole or in part, (in 11 European, 53 Asiatic, 4 African, and 7 American languages) 75; and new translations, commenced or completed, 34: presenting a total of 168. The

* Holroyd, 267.

† Bib. Soc. An. Rep. 1834.

society's circulation, at home and abroad, has been directly and indirectly sixteen or seventeen millions of copies of the whole or part of the scriptures; and this at the comparatively small expense of £2,121,640.

A fourth is—the increase of the kingdom of Christ in foreign parts. This has been chiefly effected through the labours of Protestant missionaries. Men have been called, by the lord of the harvest, to go to the different quarters of the earth to sow the “precious seed” of the kingdom, and they have been found faithful. These ministers, and the different societies and churches to which they severally belong, have more than 300 missionary stations in different parts of the heathen, or nominally christian, world: they have been enabled to collect, in many of them, large congregations, and have at present, under their pastoral care, tens of thousands of native christians, whose conduct adorns their profession, and is a glorious proof of the truth and power of christianity. We most cordially wish to all who are engaged in this enterprise of mercy, and who hold “the head,” “God speed;” but cannot now enumerate, even so far as our knowledge of it extends, the several missionary agencies, and their various success. Yet, on an occasion like the present, and in this place, I may be permitted more particularly to inform you of the state of our own missionary society, the principle of which was coeval with, and forms an integral part of Methodism. This institution is extending its labours to the whole earth; has contributed, and now, by the divine blessing, does, in no ordinary degree, contribute to meliorate and evangelize the world. It had, at the date of the last general report, (April,) 24 stations in Europe, 26 in Asia, 18 in Africa, and 109 in the West Indies and British North America—in all 177; numbered 48,304 members; had 37,965 native children and adults in the schools; and employed about 260 missionaries, besides native teachers. The exceedingly interesting accounts which we receive from missionary stations, are published (and extracts from which are read in this chapel,) monthly.

These institutions—the bible and missionary societies—are “fellow labourers” in the God-like vocation of bringing “the world” into the fold of Christ. They have jointly carried the light of salvation into the remotest and darkest parts of the universe, even where “Satan’s seat is;” and let us pray and labour that they may, and we have the best reason to hope, that going together they will, yet more

effectually promote the universal triumph of the gospel—an event which is so fully and encouragingly announced in sacred prophecy.

A fifth is—the perpetuation of Protestantism in this kingdom. I am free to confess that I do not look with any thing like gloomy foreboding to the state of Protestant christianity in our own land. A fell superstition, such as has been witnessed, may, among other evils to which we are yet exposed, again present itself in the most seductive and imposing garb; but, “that man of sin” has been “revealed” as the “son of perdition.”* The “mystery of iniquity” has been unveiled, and truth has gained the firmest footing. We are covered with the branches, and so freely partake of the fruit of this tree, that we feel persuaded there is no power *without* which can destroy it. Does not the ascertained course of things warrant this conclusion? When the principles of Protestantism were in former periods assailed, and when, for example in this country, they were well nigh lost, the circumstances in which truth was *then* placed, were widely different to those in which it is *now* found. The crown of the realm is Protestant; the institutions of the kingdom, some of which are the glory of the whole earth, are Protestant; the land is filled with copies of the scriptures, and the works of Protestant divines; and above all, the spirit of genuine christianity is (with all our failings,) much more felt and acted upon than at any previous period: so that we trust it is not too much to say to our beloved country, “Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

The last, but by no means the least, important advantage which I shall at present mention, is—the *saving* influence which the truths of christianity, as believed and taught by Protestants, have had on their lives. But where shall I begin to enumerate either the graces and virtues which they have exhibited, or the number of those who have “adorned the doctrine of God their saviour in all things?” Are they not to be found both in the establishment and out of it?—in the public and in the private walks of life? The number of Protestant christians, whose lives have been worthy of the apostolic age, cannot be reckoned up, until we behold the “great multitude stand before the throne, and before the lamb.” If even the one half of our biographical acts and monuments be correct, we have had a rational and

scriptural piety, which may well induce us to say, "The Lord, our God, be with us, as he was with our fathers."

These then are some of the results of the Reformation. To it we are indebted, I will not say for civil liberty, and the enviable station which we occupy in arts and sciences only, but for those christian principles which are in active operation in this and other countries, and which are regenerating the world's population.

I proceed to notice—

IV. The obligations which devolve on us as Protestants, and of which we are this day reminded :

And first. We should not forget the history of the Reformation. The entire history of the church of Christ, particularly such parts and parcels of it as are written with judgment and candour, deserve our attention : but that of the Reformation is so near to our own times, and its records and monuments are so many and affecting, that an attention to it will very greatly promote our knowledge of christianity itself, by the divine blessing strengthen our attachment to truth, and promote that spirit which animated our protestant ancestors—a love to Christ which "many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown." Besides, my brethren, we are still on the voyage of life, and I mean by this to point the mariner to a chart by which he will see here and there a faithful buoy apprising him of what lies beneath ; or if the beacon have not been positively left, he will be emphatically told to avoid, as far as may be, certain coasts, the near approach to which is eminently perilous.

Again : we should pay that attention to the scriptures which their importance demands. Let us implicitly submit ourselves and our concerns to their government, and ever defer to their authority ; looking for, and finding in *this* book, the "only rule, and the sufficient rule both of faith and practice." We should read them consecutively, in private, in our families, and on fit occasions in public ; meditate on them, practice their precepts, and imbibe their spirit ; revere their threatenings, and cherish their promises, as well as embrace the prospects which they unfold. Let the scriptures be given to our children, introduced into our week-day and Sunday schools, and into academies, universities, and other seminaries of instruction : remembering what holy Paul has said, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

Farther : Let us honour the truth. This debt many consider to

be paid in full when they applaud their virtuous and truth-adhering ancestors: they kindle into a mental and momentary persuasion of their own fancied attachment to, and suffering for it; whilst perhaps at that moment they are holding "the truth in unrighteousness"*—would be the very last to think of personally suffering for it, and even persecute those who maintain it. Like their brethren the Pharisees, they "build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, if *we* had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But let us not be deceived with the appearances of things, nor with the speciousness of "vain words." Truth is truth: and when the truth of God requires it, we must not linger in the sacrifice which its profession and maintenance demand, remembering who has said that the man who "loveth father or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me:" and in respect of this steadfast profession, that "he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."†

And—We should exert ourselves in the promotion and spread of the gospel.

Opportunities for doing this among our neighbours, are not wanting; and even with reference to mankind it may be attended to by supporting, according to our ability, the British and Foreign Bible Society. That institution depends entirely on voluntary support. Some persons do not fully consider this, but seem to regard the Society as carrying on a lucrative trade in books: whereas the fact is, it gains little or nothing by its immense circulation, and could not continue it, but for what is termed the "free fund," or the donations of pious and well disposed individuals. The free department of the society's income last year only amounted to about £30,000. Permit me to recommend this to your liberality: and in doing so I am following up the spirit of what our annual Conference itself has done by an unanimous resolution. In 1807 it was, in our usual way of transacting the business of the Conference, enquired "How can the conference of the Methodist connexion best testify the lively interest which they, in common with the whole christian world, cannot but feel for the success of the British and Foreign Bible Society? A. Let a public collection be made in all our principal congregations through all the districts in Great Britain, for the

* Rom. i. 18.

† Matt. x. 37, 38.

support of that excellent institution, and transmitted to brother Carter.* This was done accordingly, and the collection, which amounted to about £130, was paid to the society by the late Dr. Swan Carter. We are also called to the performance of this duty in our more immediately connecting ourselves with one or more of the missionary institutions: and through such agency lend what assistance we can in giving or beggaring the requisite increase of pecuniary means, to meet the demands of Christ's work, by sending missionaries to the different parts of the world where their labours are so much needed.

And as in this endeavouring to spread the truth, let us bear in mind that there is a connection, but not a necessary connection, between a knowledge of the gospel and its saving experience. The dying Saviour said, — I dread mightily a rational sort of religion — a religion that consists wholly in moral duties and ordinances, without the power of godliness, a way of serving God, which is mere wisdom, having no relation to Jesus Christ. Let us labour to promote that religion which is 'not meat and drink: but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost;' being true to our uniform declaration that we exist not for sectarian purposes, 'but to spread ~~our general influence~~ over the land.'†

Finally — Let each of us now present before the Lord, seek to enjoy the truths of christianity. We make our boast of God; — we trace the propagation of the gospel into England, and the most northern parts of Scotland, even those, "which were inaccessible to the Romans," to the remotest period of christian antiquity — our ancestors having been, as Origin testifies, "amongst the first fruits of the Gentiles;" — we can shew that the light of truth and the fire of love have never been extinguished on our altars; — we rejoice that when christianity was obscured, and the fine gold was dimmed, she was greatly purified and savingly exhibited in the Reformation — that at that time men were found who gladly embraced the martyr's crown, others having followed, "who loved not their lives unto the death;" — we rejoice in the numerous institutions which we find in this country for the promotion of christian knowledge, and the advancement of piety — particularly in our exhibiting to the nations of the earth the bible and missionary societies; — and we moreover rejoice to hear from time to time of the progress of the gospel in Asia, Africa, the West Indies, America, and Europe: but let us not forget, that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is *that* circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is *that* of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of man but of God."

* Min. ii. 404.

† Min. of 1774, vol. i.

§ Spots. i. i. p. 2.

A S E R M O N

PREACHED

IN THE CATHEDRAL OF WINCHESTER,

AT

THE VISITATION

OF

THE WORSHIPFUL

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DIOCESE,

ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2,

1835.

BY

EDWARD M^c ALL, A.M.

RECTOR OF WINNALL, HANTS.

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TO
THE WORSHIPFUL
THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DIOCESE,
AND TO
THE REV. THE CLERGY,
PRESENT AT HIS VISITATION,
THIS SERMON,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

I. THESS. ii. 4.

AS WE WERE ALLOWED OF GOD TO BE PUT IN TRUST
WITH THE GOSPEL, EVEN SO WE SPEAK ; NOT AS
PLEASING MEN, BUT GOD, WHICH TRIETH OUR
HEARTS.

THERE is, perhaps, no feature more prominent in the character of St. Paul's ministry, than the resolution which he formed to have constantly in view, the great outline of the plan of Redemption. He seems to have kept before him, in a compact and tangible form, the sum and substance of the Gospel, the end and object of his apostleship. He seems to have thought of it himself, and to have spoken of it to others, in terms so comprehensive that they at once pointed out the fundamental principles he was to teach ; and to have made it his effort so to simplify his character, that he might only be known as the ambassador from God to man. It was in this capacity that he introduced himself, and it was the *only* capacity in which he was anxious to be

known. He tied himself down in every possible way, lest he should transgress the integrity of this character; and, to this end, made it a matter of personal resolution and conscience, to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and in the epistles which he sent to the churches he had seen, or might visit, he pledged himself to this rule, that they might observe and tax his consistency. He told them the nature and the sacredness of his office; and so amply bore out in his practice what he had represented to them in his profession, that he could appeal to themselves, as to the uniform consistency of his life. "Ye are witnesses (he says to the Thessalonians, in the chapter in which our text lies), and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:" and he goes on to remind them of the particular features of his ministry, "how he exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of them." In the same way also he writes to the Philippians, "Those things which ye have learned, and received, and *seen* in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." He thus endeavoured to be a living epistle and example of the doctrines which he taught, and therefore could say to all, "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

In the same way, if time permitted, his appeal to the Corinthian and other Churches might be

adduced,* all tending to prove that he was anxious to keep before his own mind, and the minds of the persons to whom he wrote, or with whom he might associate, the doctrines of the Gospel, as embodied and reflected in his life. There is only one other instance which shall be quoted—an instance evincing that what he thought so important to himself, he thought equally important to his brethren. It is the message sent by St. Paul to Archippus; “Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.” This message he does not send to him direct, but through the church at Colosse; “*Say* to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received, that thou fulfil it;” wishing not only to impress Archippus with the responsibility of his charge, and the duty of fulfilling it, but to shew to the “saints and faithful brethren” to whom he wrote, that if the office of Archippus was responsible, it was the value of their souls which made it so; and to induce them to bear with him, while in the execution of his duty, and in fulfilment of his ministry, he rebuked and exhorted with all long-suffering and doctrine. Their eye would thenceforth be on him; and he would be reminded not only by the message itself, but by the channel through which it was conveyed, not to *neglect* the gift which was in him, but to be instant in season and out of season.

* 2 Cor. i. 12, vi. 2, 10. Acts xx. 18, 21.

St. Paul's motive for this, and for all which he officially did, is found in our text—"As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts;" in which words he refers First, to the SACRED TRUST he had received ; and Secondly, to HIS MANNER OF FULFILLING IT. While we are endeavouring to follow him in the order of his remarks, may the Spirit of God suggest and sanctify our meditations.

I. St. Paul, in the words before us, alludes first. *to the sacred trust which he had received ; and the language he has employed evinces gratitude ; points out the source ; implies the responsibility ; and describes the nature of the trust.*

1. *He cannot refer to it without gratitude.*
 "As we were *allowed* of God to be put in trust with the Gospel"—*allowed*, as a matter of favour and a matter of trial. He considered it his highest honour ; and whenever he was led to speak of his appointment to the ministry, it was in terms of a similar kind. "I was made a minister," he writes to the Ephesians, "according to the gift of the grace of God"—"unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is *this grace given*, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He would magnify his office, and acknowledge the favour he had received, that "God should count

him worthy, putting him into the ministry ;” that he who was “ before a blasphemer and injurious,” should proclaim the faith which once he despised and destroyed. He wished to keep in mind that as it was by the grace of God he was what he was; so that it was *especially* by his grace that he had been appointed to the ministry of the Church. In executing that ministry, he was a “ worker together with God ”—a “ fellow labourer ” with Him in the husbandry of the spiritual world. St. Paul, therefore, would remember what he was, that he might be thankful for what he had become. And every one who, like him, is first converted from the error of his ways, and then commissioned with St. Peter to strengthen and convert his brethren, will feel with them both, that he is under the *deepest obligation*, as well as the heaviest responsibility, and that he can never be thankful enough that he was *allowed* to be put in trust with the Gospel.

2. St. Paul refers next to the *source of his appointment*. “ We were allowed of God ”—a fact he could never forget. He could never lose sight of that moment “ when it pleased God to call him by His grace, and to reveal His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the heathen :” * and as he at first “ conferred not with flesh and blood,” so ever after he would bear in mind that he had been called with a

* Galatians, i. 16.

heavenly calling, and commissioned by God himself. The honour of being an overseer of the flock, was not one which he had taken upon himself; but one which he had a clear conviction and evidence, had been bestowed by the Holy Ghost.* This, while it gave him authority, inspired him with hope, that He who had assigned him his work, would assist him in its execution, and crown it with success. He went forth, therefore, under the sanction, and in reliance upon the blessing of God; and the results of his labours shew that he was not disappointed of his hope. God had communicated to Ananias his purpose in calling the Apostle; saying "he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:" and in the subsequent history of St. Paul's labours, we find how abundantly this purpose was fulfilled. The Apostle's confidence in the genuineness of his call, gave a tone and effect to his ministry; and as he found it to inspire himself with holy zeal, he was anxious that those about him should know the unquestionable validity of his appointment. "I was allowed of God thus to address you." "I bring a message from God to thee—take heed, therefore, how it is heard."

And every successor of St. Paul in the ministry of the Gospel, finds how important it is to

* Acts, xx. 28.

keep in sight the credentials on which he acts. He trusts that he has been "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost" to take upon him the office he sustains—that God who called the Apostle, has in like manner called him; and that when thus called, *he* also replied, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" He trusts that God who called Samuel, has inclined him also to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" and that having received his instructions, he has gone forth in gratitude, simplicity, and faith.

3. The Apostle's words also prove that he entertained a deep sense of the *responsibility* of the embassy on which he was sent; for out of the abundance of his heart, he has expressed that feeling in our text—"We were allowed of God to be *put in trust* with the Gospel." He had been appointed a minister of Christ, and a steward of the mysteries of God; and realizing the fact, he felt that it was thenceforward *required* of him that he be found faithful. He would therefore remember the vows of God which were upon him, and the nature and obligations of his charge; that a dispensation of the Gospel having been committed to him, he was "a *debtor* both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." * He felt that the talent which he had received was not a gift, nor a loan, nor a deposit; but a *commission*, the

* Romans, i. 14.

terms of which were binding and express: and therefore he said to the Corinthians, in language which is conclusive to our point, and which may supersede the quotation of many parallel expressions familiar to us all—"Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, *woe is unto me* if I preach not the Gospel." So *adequately* did St. Paul appreciate and realize the sacred obligations under which he had been placed.

We, my Reverend Brethren, are invited and accustomed to regard the Apostle before us, as a pattern of faithfulness and zeal; (as, indeed, we are permitted to look up to his Lord and ours, whose ministerial character is so encouraging and instructive; but as our present text is the language of St. Paul, it seems to restrict our attention to him.) In taking him, then, for our pattern, we often feel how much more available his example would have been, had he lived in times more analogous to our own. Would not this difficulty be in some measure overcome, if all of us were to settle in our own minds, what would be the line of conduct pursued by St. Paul in the very sphere in which we are individually placed? By carrying out the principles at which we should thus arrive, we should each of us, as it were, personate the Apostle; and enable him, though dead, yet to speak in our attempted imitation and example.

To apply this suggestion, if admitted, to ourselves and the times in which we live—when, though we have not to build up the spiritual temple, each, with his sword girded by his side,* as in the days of Nehemiah, we still overhear the fightings without, while we are conscious of the fears that are within ; times, therefore, which require the full exercise of every talent we possess, as Christian patriots and Christian ministers.

How would St. Paul behave in such times ? The answer needs not to be given by one for all ; nor would it be necessary that all should precisely agree as to every minute particular. Whatever might be the conclusion arrived at by each, every one of us feels, that in so far as we could respectively personate St. Paul, we should faithfully and efficiently fulfil our ministry. It does not seem impossible to imagine him as living in the nineteenth century instead of the first ; nor to conceive how he would have acted *had* his lot been cast with our own—how he who laboured more abundantly than all around him, and who felt the fearful responsibility of the office he sustained, would, in putting his Lord's talents out to interest, have inquired into the best mode of trading† or occupation‡—how, with this view, he would have examined his position in Society and the Church, and inquired into

* Nehemiah, iv. 18.

† Matthew, xxv. 16.

‡ Luke, xix. 13.

the duties legitimately springing out of it—how he would have economised his time, his strength, and all the faculties he possessed, and subordinated every thing to the great objects of his mission. By proceeding thus, he would discover how extensively, and in how many different ways, God had permitted him to be useful ; and would feel that his responsibility was commensurate with the scale on which his labours could be carried on—a principle applying to one Christian as well as to another ; to a minister as well as an Apostle. The danger seems to be, not so much that he who has five talents or two, will be unfaithful to his trust ; as that he who has only one, will imagine he has none. God has administered to us severally as He will, in kind as well as in extent ; and many who may have but one talent in one way, may have two, or even five, in another ; and the employment of each is demanded in its place. Frequently, perhaps, we mistake our weakness for our strength ; and in attempting to do what we cannot, we neglect doing what we can. And in this we are abetted by Satan, who, anxious to “hinder” us, as he hindered St. Paul,* urges him who is willing to work, to work beyond his strength, and him who is indifferent about it, not to work at all.†

* 1 Thess. ii. 18.

† The Author has been induced, in looking over his MS. for the press, slightly to extend the observations in this and the preceding page.

4. The Apostle, having gratefully pointed out the source, and feelingly alluded to the responsibility of his trust, mentions at length *the trust itself*. "We were allowed of God to be put in trust *with the Gospel*;" a term so familiar, that it appears to need no explanation; and yet so vast and comprehensive as to baffle every attempt to define it—embracing truths so simple, that "he who runs may read*;" and mysteries so profound, that the angels in vain desire to comprehend them.†

Association has rendered the phrase, *the Gospel*, not only familiar to us, but the symbol of ideas which no other term could so adequately express. After seeking for definitions which it cannot discover, the mind falls back with repose upon the phrase itself, as its own and best interpreter. In our text it stands alone; but the Apostle frequently couples with it an epithet expressive of the glory‡ or the grace§ it displayed; and evincing also, that as the message with which he was entrusted was to gladden the hearts of those to whom it was sent; it gladdened, in like manner, the heart of him who brought it. His appeal, always implied, and sometimes expressed, was, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe,

* Hab. ii. 2.

‡ 1 Timothy, i. 11.

† 1 Peter, i. 2.

§ Acts, xx. 24.

and therefore speak." His language was at once the language of gratitude and of experience. He was publishing a remedy by which he had himself been restored. He was the herald of mercy, entrusted with "the ministry of reconciliation," and directed to proclaim that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself;" that God had sent his Son to die, the just for the unjust, to render satisfaction for the sins of all mankind.

To every creature, therefore, was this Gospel to be preached; to be addressed to every prodigal, famishing as he was, remote from home, while in his Father's house, from which he was a voluntary exile, there was bread enough and to spare. And to every such prodigal, whom the grace of God should have brought "to himself;"* who should have discovered the happiness from which he had fallen, and the hopeless misery by which he was surrounded; distracted between the fear of the prodigal and the hope of the child; and at length resolving that he will, on a peradventure, arise and go to his Father—the invitation of the Gospel meeting him then, would prove indeed glad tidings of great joy.

The son would be restored to his Father's home; not as he intended to propose, in the character of a hired servant, but as the child who left it; the best robe would be brought and put

* Luke, xv. 17.

upon him, and amidst the rejoicing of many who would be called to participate in the delight, the Parent would gratefully say, " This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

But the Gospel does not end here. It is not as the physician who should restore the patient, and then forsake him; nor as the shepherd who should reclaim the lost sheep, and leave it on its return to wander as before. A sheep once lost; a convalescent once sick; and, above all, a son once prodigal; have each evinced a tendency, which will awaken the solicitude of the parent or the guide. The language of advice will almost be exchanged for the language of warning; and affection and faithfulness will suggest precautions which were not thought necessary before. The anxious parent, remembering the past disobedience of his child, does not abandon him to his own misguidance; but gives him safe and wholesome rules, which the fear of a relapse, and gratitude for his restoration, alike constrain him to obey. The Gospel has its precepts, as well as its privileges; and denies the enjoyment of the one, to all who neglect the other; while, at the same time, it claims obedience, from motives to which no convert can possibly be insensible. He has been rendered conscious of the bitterness as well as the evil of sin; and has felt that it exposed him to the just judgment of God. He has pleaded guilty to the

charge brought against him; and passing sentence on himself, has realized his liability to eternal condemnation. But then it was, and when there appeared no eye to pity, that "One strong to deliver and mighty to save," opened the door of his prison, and let him go free. He was dismissed in peace, for that his sins were forgiven him; while, as an evidence of the gratitude he could not but feel, his Redeemer had enjoined him to sin no more.

Thus is the Gospel a restorative system, preventing the recurrence of that which it corrects; and calculated, wherever it is embraced, to bring "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Of this remedial system, the "*testimony of Jesus*," which was the "spirit of prophecy,"* is the distinguishing theme and characteristic: so that St. Paul pronounced the *sum* of his preaching to be—"Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." To preach CHRIST in all the offices He sustains, of Prophet, Priest, and King, is in effect, though in other words, to preach the GOSPEL. And this, originating in the mercy of God—unpurchased and undeserved—requires that only which it has first of all given. Grace prevents, and grace co-operates. The sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit are not withheld from those who are adopted into the family of God; and thus are

* Rev. xix. 10.

they made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

II. These are some, though they are necessarily but few, of the features of the Gospel with which the Apostle had been entrusted ; and following him through the remainder of the passage before us, we will inquire *in what way this trust was fulfilled*. “As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, *so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts.*”

1. “*So we speak*”—“as the oracles of God”—in conformity with our instructions, agreeably to the will of Him who sent us. The Apostle would appeal to the Scriptures of truth, and wish his hearers to examine, like the Bereans, whether the things he told them *were* so. “To the law and to the testimony : if we speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in us.” So we speak—giving you our authority, and referring you to a standard from which there is no appeal. And he was anxious, too, that the *spirit* of the Gospel should be infused into the matter and style of his preaching ; that he might not only speak the truth, but that he might speak it “in love :” in love towards the souls of his hearers, constrained by the love of Christ. Knowing also the terror of the Lord, he would persuade men, shunning not to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. He would speak with *simpli-*

city; with a single eye to the glory of God, and the welfare of those to whom he was sent. He would speak as the occasion demanded; and while he would avoid the very appearance of evil, he would become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. He would study the wants of his hearers; and would endeavour so rightly to divide the word of truth, that he might give to all their portion of meat in due season. He would bear in mind that what might be seasonable at one moment, might be unseasonable at another: that truth misapplied or out of place, might prove not medicinal, but poisonous. He would wish, therefore, to bring the provisions of the Gospel to bear upon the individual necessities of those who heard him; supplying food or medicine according to their need. He would prove a Barnabas or a Boanerges; consoling the broken in heart, and alarming those who might be "at ease in Zion." * As a Christian pastor, he would feed the sheep and the lambs of Christ's flock; as a Christian minister, he would do the work of an Evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry.

The Apostle had been entrusted with the messages of God: and it was his duty not only to deliver them, but to deliver them aright. He was to consider to whom they were addressed, and then to inquire who answered the descrip-

* Amos, vi. 1.

tion afforded. “*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*” “*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*” “*Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him.*” “*Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him.*” These are messages which he was to bear from God to his people—and such as he could affirm he delivered. So, he says, *we speak.*

The ambassador must keep close to his instructions, and acquaint himself with the will of him who sent him. The ambassador from God to man, must with this view, diligently search the scriptures; and if he does not clothe his message in scriptural language, yet must he take heed that his message itself, in its spirit and application, be *scriptural*. The Apostle whose words we are considering, had a deep sense of the responsibility under which he laboured on this point. “*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*” Whoever should thus “*put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter,*” would show that he was unacquainted with the Gospel himself, and not qualified to teach it to others—for if, on the one hand, the minister, by “*taking heed to his doctrine, shall both save himself and them that hear him:*” on the other, if being blind himself, he undertake to lead the blind, *both* must fall into the ditch.

2. So then we speak—but he that would speak so, must “set his face as a flint;” and must be content to proceed, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. He must speak “*not as pleasing men;*” not anxious to flatter, but to benefit; not seeking for their applause; not preaching himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; anxious to win them, not to himself, but to his Master. He must use “*great plainness*” of speech; not forgetting that the *poor* must have the Gospel preached unto them. He must not, for the sake of some literary characters present, who indeed would be the last to require it, adopt language which the rest cannot understand; but while he would employ “sound speech,” which cannot be justly condemned of any one, he must proceed, as his Saviour did, “as the people are able to bear it;” keeping back nothing that is profitable, obtruding nothing that is uncalled for.

But in the detail of parochial ministrations, circumstances often arise, in which the minister feels the extreme delicacy of his situation. He will have before him, the awful declaration—“When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thine hands.*”^{*} This would prompt

^{*} Ezekiel, xxxlii. 8.

him to unshackled faithfulness ; but his zeal, unless tempered with discretion, might betray him into that which would be injurious. It is not from an impulse suddenly inspired by one direction of the word of God, but from a well-digested view of its whole contents, that the minister has to act. One passage will afford him the weapon ; another will tell him how to wield it—one will lay down the rule ; another will specify the exception. He must therefore be on his guard, lest in obeying the letter of the one precept, he violate the spirit of the other ; lest, if he does not do evil that good may come, he cause his good to be evil spoken of. The man, and especially the *minister* of God, must be thoroughly furnished—furnished with the “ *whole* armour of God ;” knowing in what manner, at what time, and with what weapon to attack. He must prove himself a *good* soldier. He must war a *good* warfare. He must be a workman that needeth not to be *ashamed*. His desire must not be in the first place to please, but to profit ; not that he would intentionally displease, for to aim at conciliation, as a means of doing good, is one of his highest duties : but he must take heed lest compromise be the price of conciliation. When he cannot attack the branch, he will strike at the root : when he cannot reach sin in the principle, he will expose it in the *conscience*. And, for the rest, his reply must be that of Peter and John,

“Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.”

“*Not as pleasing men.*” The exposure which the minister is called to make of the depravity of the human heart; the doctrine, that it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, that salvation is to be obtained—these are displeasing to man. The preaching of the Gospel is now, as of old, too often “foolishness” to those who hear it, and instead of proving a savour of life, becomes a savour of death. There is an infatuation on the minds of some persons, which inclines them, even against their convictions and forebodings, to wish to hear that all is well. Though they feel that they are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; yet they desire to be soothed by a delusion coming to them with authority. “The prophets prophesy falsely, and my people *love to have it so.*”* They wish to hear of “smooth things;” things which call for no surrender. They desire to serve God *and* mammon, and to be told that the two are compatible. But when they are required to cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, which proves a stumbling-block; when they are directed to take up their cross and to follow their Redeemer; “immediately they are offended.”

* Jeremiah, v. 11.

The sacrifice is too great ; they go back, and “ walk no more with Jesus.”

In meekness, then, must we instruct those who thus oppose themselves ; for, peradventure, God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And if this forbearance should “ gain our brother,” his gratitude will be as great as our own. He was displeased with us before—now he is displeased with himself—and remembering with sorrow what is past, he is thankful to realise the change.

s. St. Paul then, in fulfilling his ministry, was not over anxious to please *men*—his anxiety was *to please God—which tried his heart.*

This was his constraining motive, and this is the emphasis of our text. The Apostle throughout acknowledges himself a steward, and expresses the feelings becoming that relation ; but remembering that he is the steward of *God*, he feels that it is God’s prerogative, and His habit, to try His servant’s heart. He would therefore *exercise* himself, not only to have a conscience void of offence towards *men*, in the way he had just expressed ; but towards *God* more especially ; knowing that to Him, as his Master, he must stand or fall. He would ever wish to regard himself as an accountable servant ; who was amenable, not only for his conduct, but for his motives also, and his thoughts. He knew that God, to whom all hearts are open, and all

desires known ; “ whose eyes behold, and whose eyelids try the children of men ; ” * would and did more especially exercise that vigilance over him and his brethren in the ministry. As “ bearing the vessels of the Lord,” they were admitted to closer communion. As ambassadors, they enjoyed the sacred confidence of their King. It was necessary, therefore, not only that their heart should be “ right ” with Him *in the main*, but that they should *never* “ handle the word of God,” nor perform any part of their work “ deceitfully ; ” but, by a full and faithful manifestation of the truth, commend themselves to every man’s conscience, *in the sight of God*. That this was the Apostle’s own view of his duty is clear from his honest declaration to the Corinthians, “ We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God ; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

God tried his heart, as he tries the heart of every minister of his word. May they never forget it. May we, my Reverend Brethren, keep God always before us, as his eye is always upon us. May we realize his presence in the closet while preparing, and in the pulpit while preaching. May we realize the presence of God, that we may be unfettered by the presence of man—remembering that if our congregation amount to but two or three, God is present in the midst.

* Psalm xl. 4.

The remembrance of this, while it reminds us of our duty, will prompt us to discharge it. It will make us humble, and it will make us faithful; it will kindle and regulate our zeal. Having drawn our materials from the word of God, He is present to witness their application; and being applied thus, and by Him, they cannot fail of success. He not only tries our hearts, but has beneath his controul the hearts of our hearers; and we shall find that many are influenced, like Lydia, to attend to the things which we speak.*

But if God thus tries our hearts, we shall know how important and advantageous it is to try and examine them ourselves; and not only to act under the habitual consciousness of God's superintendence, but to fix on special seasons of solemn retrospect and reckoning. And, perhaps, one more suitable to our purpose could scarcely be selected, than when convened, as we now are, to render up our annual account. We ourselves, indeed, are silent on these occasions; but others are interrogated as to the way in which our duty is discharged, and we appear to abide the result. These interrogations are of necessity superficial; extending no further than our outward conduct. The *heart* is not within the cognizance of any earthly tribunal, but must be left to ourselves and our God. What more appropriate season then could we select than the present, for doing

* Acts, xvi. 14.

what cannot be done by others, or by deputy—for sitting in judgment on ourselves, and demanding an account of our own stewardship?—or by what more similar occurrence could we be reminded of the bar at which we must one day stand, when God, who tries our hearts now, will try our thoughts, and words, and works?

We are stewards of the mysteries of God; and perhaps can call to our remembrance the feelings with which we at first undertook so high a responsibility. Did we over-rate that responsibility then, or do we under-rate it now? May we not seasonably ask God to rekindle whatever ardour may since have subsided; and enable us henceforward to devote ourselves without reserve, and without weariness, to his service?—that, as we grow older in that service, we may become better acquainted with its duties, and more zealous in discharging them—that a recollection of the superintendence exercised by God, may excite a corresponding vigilance on our own part: that so, being set to watch for souls as those that must give account, it may be our happiness, when our Lord returns to reckon with us,* that our account be rendered with joy, and not with grief.

* Matthew, xxv. 19.

**CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP AND DISCIPLINE
SHOULD BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND MORE
ZEALOUSLY MAINTAINED.**

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER,

AND THE CLERGY,

AT

ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH, WHITEHAVEN,

AT HIS LORDSHIP'S VISITATION

IN JULY, 1835.

BY THE

REV. JOHN WORDSWORTH, M. A.

**RECTOR OF WORKINGTON, VICAR OF BRIGHAM, AND DOMESTIC
CHAPLAIN TO THE EARL OF WESTMORELAND.**

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M.DCCC.XXXV.



The following Sermon, written and preached under the impression that more was to be feared for the Church of England at present from the relaxation of her discipline, than from any want of zeal in her Ministers, taken as a Body, having been much approved by some of the Author's Clerical Friends, whose judgment He highly esteems, is, at their instigation, published.

A SERMON.

HEBREWS xiii. 17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do so with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.

THESE words of St. Paul addressed to the Hebrew converts, set before us, in a most impressive point of view, the relation which subsists between spiritual Teachers, and the people committed to their charge. They are therefore most appropriate for the edification and instruction in their mutual duties of both Ministers and the members of their respective flocks. And as I see many of the Laity around me, no apology can be required for directing the word of exhortation to them likewise; especially as nothing can be addressed to the one party, that may not by implication at least, be profitable to the other. Moreover, this course will in part, free me from the embarrassment of appearing with too great freedom to admonish those, who (most of them at least), from years, learning, and professional experience are more competent to give, than

they are under any necessity of receiving, the best instruction that can be offered, by so humble an Individual as Myself.

It appears to me likewise, that my topic is a well chosen one, on this account, that *confessedly* one of the greatest errors, or rather calamities, of these present times, both amongst the Laity, and amongst the Clergy also, is, from an excess of Protestant feeling, the habit of depreciating the spiritual claims and authority of the ministerial office. But the danger from Popery, which is represented as fast increasing upon us, arises, I suspect, from our too great fear and dread of it—our strengthening disinclination to separate and to retain what is tenable and philosophic (wise) in its system, (and what, in times when spiritual authority was more respected, was more prominently brought forward as belonging to our own,) from what is *untenable, irrational, and unscriptural*. Consistent error must, in the end, gain the mastery over inconsistent truth, or what possesses the greatest share of it. It therefore behoves us to strengthen our cause by a *greater unity of action and sentiment*, my Reverend Brethren, to *increase* our influence by an increased attention to, and enforcement of, that discipline which is so much required, and fearless of taunt and misrepresentation, to exact the spiritual allegiance, and submission, which the Apostle so earnestly and so emphatically enforces upon his Hebrew converts in the words of my text.

If, therefore, by the grace of God, I am enabled, by what I shall say, to raise a single individual who may need such admonition, of those two classes, to which my remarks will be respectively addressed, to higher and more primitive views, as to those things which relate to Church-membership and discipline, I shall account the time employed well spent; and the subject I have selected, well chosen. Without further preface or remark, therefore, I shall proceed to make those reflections to which the text naturally directs me.

“It is now,” remarks an Author most distinguished for habits of profound reflection, and who has recently finished his earthly course, “It is now twenty years since I read Chillingworth’s book, (entitled ‘The religion of Protestants a safe way to salvation,’) but certainly it appeared to me that his main position, that the mere text of the Bible is the sole and exclusive ground of Christian faith and practice, is quite untenable against the Romanists. It entirely destroys the conditions of a Church, of an authority residing in a religious Community, and all that holy sense of brotherhood which is so sublime and consolatory to a meditative Christian. Had I been a Papist, I should not have wished for a more vanquishable opponent in Controversy.”* Here we have the point con-

* Coleridge. “Table Talk,” as quoted in the British Magazine, Vol. VII. 720.

ceded, with substantial reasons given in support of it, by one whose opinion is entitled to the highest esteem ; here, I say, we have the point conceded, that *there is a spiritual authority*, and that *there are exclusive spiritual privileges and promises* annexed to an apostolically constituted Priesthood, not proceeding on the one hand, doubtless, so far as to justify the arrogant claims set up by the Romish Hierarchy to *infallibility* ; nor on the other, capable of being frittered down so as to allow of an unqualified right of private judgment, exercising itself upon the mere text of scripture, (even where, to the carnal understanding, the moral and intellectual qualifications are pretty much alike,) to be the sole rule of faith and discipline in matters of religion. Now I will not undertake, upon the present occasion, to go over the scriptural arguments, and those drawn from antiquity, (for doubtless, my Reverend Brethren, you are all more or less acquainted with them, and the inferences you draw from them are more or less favorable to Church-Unity and discipline,) I will not undertake to go over these proofs in favor of a spiritual authority residing in the Church—of the Apostolic succession, and of its bearing upon the sacraments and ordinances of the Church—of the inference that the Priesthood are, in a manner, the channels through which divine grace is communicated—of the dignity and authority of the oral word—of the importance of

common prayer and *common* confession—of absolution and of the high privileges and blessing accruing to any people who have it placed within their reach, to appropriate such advantages to themselves; but taking the lowest ground, that any amongst us would, I am sure, be disposed to take upon these matters, let me ask with all due deference and submission, have these things, my Reverend Brethren, been insisted upon by us, with that frequency and earnestness which their importance demands? or have we not rather too readily acquiesced in the mere taste and fashion of the day, and consented to place the whole almost of outward religion in the mere delivery of, or listening to, discourses, not to speak of more irregular expositions and assemblies? Notwithstanding the *enthusiastic* character of the religion of some, are there no just grounds for accusing us, of being too much influenced by “the fear of man, which bringeth a snare;” and of too zealously cultivating that peculiarly *moral*, that Aristotelian virtue, *φρόνησις* that *prudence*, which, although it occupied a high place in heathen Ethics, is, nevertheless, a virtue which savours more of earth than of Heaven!

But to descend to Particulars. Have we, then, my Reverend Brethren, been sufficiently “watchful for the souls” of our people, in setting before them in its proper light, the all-important sacrament of Baptism? It is much to be lamented that the custom is so general of

administering this holy ordinance just previous to the Afternoon Service upon the Lord's Day, and not after the Second Lesson. At the first-named period that importance and respectful attention, which the solemn nature of that sacrament requires, and the dignity and the beauty of the service demands, cannot always be secured; besides it is not sufficiently brought before the notice and observance of those, who arrived at years of discretion, have, at the solemn rite of Confirmation, taken upon themselves their baptismal vows.

That our Church holds the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, no attentive reader of the baptismal service will, I think, be disposed to deny. And this view of the subject is strengthened, as has been recently remarked, by a comparison of the service appointed for Adults, with the one appointed for Infants. The expressions in the latter will be found much stronger and more unqualified than in the former. "It is true," continues the same writer, "that the Adult receivers of baptism, in the address to the Assistants, are pronounced "regenerate," and not so to esteem them in human judgment—thus coming of their own accord to the baptismal font—would ill accord with that charity which hopeth all things.—But the fact which deserves observation, is, that God is not thanked (as in the case of Infants) for having regenerated them by his Holy Spirit, or for having made them his

own Children by adoption; nor is one word said of their death to sin, or of their participation in the death of Christ. All this is doubtless to be hoped concerning them. But it would have been an excess of presumption"* to have asserted these things, when God alone could be the judge, whether the Adult receivers of baptism possessed the necessary qualifications for obtaining these high privileges and blessings.

But to proceed—With regard, then, to the solemn rite of Confirmation, in preparing the candidates for which we have been so lately engaged. When we contrast the numbers of young persons who attend our Schools, with the scanty portion, especially males, which can be induced to participate in this impressive rite, the laxness and indifference of Parents with respect to it, and their ignorance of, or their want of faith in, its strengthening and confirming powers towards those who rightly receive it, forces itself irresistibly upon our notice. "Confirmation," says Archbishop Potter, "was continued in the Church for the same end that it had been instituted—viz. to confer the Holy Spirit." "Regeneramur," says Bishop Sparrow, "ad vitam per baptismum, in hoc confirmamur ad pugnam."

Are the lax views entertained at this day upon this solemn rite of the Church to be attributed, in part, or entirely, my Reverend Brethren, to ourselves?

* Knox's Remains, Vol. I. 458-9.

Again. Had that obedience to appointed Pastors and Teachers, so emphatically inculcated in the text, been sufficiently insisted upon by Us, on the one hand, and the mighty privilege which the Church offers to the worthy Communicant been duly set forth upon the other—had it been clearly stated, that *divine grace is actually conveyed to the receiver of the consecrated elements, provided there be no positive impediment to interrupt and impede their efficacy*; then, I cannot but think, that our reiterated appeals upon this momentous subject would have been followed by happier results than, at present, we can be persuaded have attended them.

Lastly: with regard to the service of *Common Prayer*, which, when properly conducted, so effectually contributes to foster “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” and more than any other helps to create a sense of Church-membership, and to make us feel that “we are all members one of another”—with respect to this service, had we, my Reverend Brethren, been sufficiently alive to the spiritual authority entrusted to us by the divine Founder of the Church; surely we could never have permitted our congregations to lapse into an almost total disuse of one of its most necessary and characteristic accompaniments.

Common Prayer, according to the just theory of our Church, implies on the part of the congregation, a mental fellowship with the Minister through every portion of the prayers, as is im-

plied in the “Amen” at the close of each prayer (to be audibly pronounced, as a sanction and confirmation of what the voice of the Minister has uttered;) wisely also was it ordained that this participation with the service should be further sustained by an interspersion of responses *audibly pronounced*, which not only tend to keep alive devotion in the body of the congregation, but also to support the zeal of the Minister by testifying to him that the hearts and minds of those for whom the prayers are offered up, go along with him. Public worship loses one of its greatest attractions by the neglect and too general omission of this last-named observance, and a species of religious excitement healthful and legitimate in its character, and one not likely to degenerate into extravagance, is thus lost to a Church, jealous, while she fans the flame of genuine piety and devotion, that all things should be done according to the Apostle’s injunction, “decently and in order.”

If, however, it be urged on the other hand, that these things, and such as these, have been enforced, and placed upon as high a footing as the spirit of the times will admit, and that by attempting more, the cause of truth and the Gospel is injured; I caution you, that if you bend to such a spirit in some matters connected with Apostolic doctrine and discipline, wherein you are supported by reason, scripture, and primitive practice; I *caution you*, that the *same*

views and course of conduct will compel you to give way upon *others* also: and the time may not be far distant, when *the doctrines peculiarly Christian as they are called*, distorted, as in many cases they are, may become *unpalatable* likewise, and our people wearied with what is exaggerated and unsound, be tempted to fall back upon a Church arrogating to herself infallibility, or relapse, as in the times of Charles the Second, after the excesses of Puritanism, into scepticism and indifference.

Let me hope, my Reverend Brethren, that feeling strongly as I do upon this subject, I have not spoken with unbecoming freedom upon it.

I proceed for the reasons stated in the opening of this discourse, and because the text directs more emphatically our meditations that way, to address my further remarks to the Laity, and to class what more I have to say under the head, *of the deference which is due from the people to their Minister*.

If, then, it is *his* place, as *He* must give account, to “watch for their souls,” it is *theirs* to obey him who has the rule over them, and to submit themselves. Let us, then, my Brethren of the Laity, enter a little more at large into the consideration of the nature and extent of this duty, since all that is passing around us has a tendency to relax it. There is no fear *now* of a disposition on the part of your Minister to lord

it over either your persons or consciences. The danger is of a too great subserviency on his part to your humours and likings. The danger is—not of his saying too boldly and too fearlessly (for that he cannot do) this is the doctrine—this should be the practice of the members of Christ's Catholic Church, therefore receive the one, and follow the other—but of his erroneously concluding that, since such and such practices will be commended, such and such doctrines approved, therefore he must adopt them. It is well, therefore, and profitable (in times of boundless liberality, and when, the Church being vehemently attacked, Church-membership should be better understood and more zealously maintained,) it is well and profitable for both Ministers and people, that declarations of Scripture, such as the one I have selected for my text, be frequently and prominently brought forward. Do we then seek to abandon the Protestant doctrine of free and unfettered investigation, and to enforce the Roman Catholic one, of *implicit* obedience to spiritual Teachers? Certainly not! But still our Church anxious to avoid the abuse of either principle, inculcates a rational and scriptural obedience to appointed Pastors and Teachers. And the whole of St. Paul's exhortations to the different Churches and Individuals he addresses, breathes a like spirit. We labour in vain to enlist the great Apostle in particular, or revelation in

general, on the side of insubordination, religious or political. The people, therefore, in an humble and quiet spirit, are bound to attend to their Minister, with every disposition to profit by his instructions, and to "esteem him very highly in love for his works' sake." They must not regard him in the light of a religious Declaimer, to whose discourses they may attend, or not, for the sake of the spiritual excitement and novelty they supply, and which they are at perfect liberty to forget, as soon as the Church is left, (notwithstanding the too great tendency of our Protestant congregations to undervalue *Common Prayer* and *the Sacraments*, as means of grace and edification, in comparison with *preaching*, the really *least important* of the three.) No! They must attend in all things to the instructions they receive from their Minister, regarding him as a Person holding, by divine appointment, an office for their spiritual welfare and improvement, and from whose labours they may hope to reap both comfort and blessing, whilst they honor the servant for the sake of that heavenly Master, in whose name he speaks, and by whose authority and commission he acts.

It is as much the Minister's duty to assert his high claims to the spiritual submission of his people, (and he is false to his office and to his order if he do not so,) as it is the people's (provided alway, that *his* (the Minister's) doctrines; and those of *his* branch of the Church Apostolic;

be in accordance with the word of God,) to render him all due deference and submission. The same power which invests him with authority in spiritual matters, marks out to them the path of obedience therein. Why is spiritual rule entrusted to him, (for the due use of which, however, he must render a strict account, shewing that as far as in him lay, he employed it for the glory of God, and the salvation of his people's souls,) if they, on their part, will render no submission? To what purpose does *he* minister to them in sacred things, if *they*, "with itching ears heap to themselves Teachers," and will not receive them? Remember the solemn manner in which ministerial authority and exclusive ministerial promises were given and entrusted by our Saviour himself to the first Teachers of the Gospel, and through them to their Successors, and fear to make light thereof. "Then the eleven disciples" (as St. Matthew has recorded the circumstance in his 28th chapter) "went away into Galilee into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

But further observe, my Brethren of the Laity, what strong motives the text presents to *Your* consideration, to induce *You* to comply with *Your* part of the obligation. It is for *Your* souls that your Ministers must watch, and *unwatchfulness* in *them*, and disobedience in *you*, will be alike "unprofitable," as the text has it, to both. To *You* do faithful Ministers dedicate both their time and thoughts. To *Your* spiritual and eternal welfare and interests, are they in heart and soul devoted. *Your* salvation is the great object which they have continually in view. *You*, therefore, being the party most vitally interested and concerned, are imperatively called upon to do *your* part. For, although, the text proceeds to say, that *he* (the Minister) "must give an account of his ministry," and hence it might be erroneously supposed, that all the responsibility will rest with him: yet this is not the case. You, as well as your Ministers, Brethren, will be answerable for the account. And if amid a long confession of ministerial errors and deficiencies, still upon the whole it can be made to appear, that the blame of "falling short of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," rests with *You* and not with *them*; then will "your blood be upon your own heads," and your Ministers be pronounced guiltless of it. Surely, then, it will be for the mutual joy and advantage of both Ministers and people, that each should religiously observe the solemn bonds by which

they are united. So shall they work together for each other's good, both for time and for eternity—"sinners will be converted from the error of their ways," and "the Lord will add daily to his Church, such as shall be saved."

Such, my Brethren of the Clergy and of the Laity, is the imperfect sketch I have attempted to lay before, and to impress upon, You, of the mutual relations (mainly in reference to Church-membership and discipline,) which unite You to each other. And as I have selected this topic, let it not be supposed that I have endeavoured to underrate or to relax the necessity of *unremitting* attention to parochial duties and ministrations. Quite the reverse! But as the relations to which I have referred, are seldom viewed, and brought forward, as it appears to me their importance demands, therefore it is, that I have humbly endeavoured to direct your attention to, and to conciliate your increased esteem for, and observance of, them. And as conducing to so desirable an end, surely the prayers of each party are due for the other—the Ministers' for their people—the people's for their Ministers. Let such be offered up upon the present occasion in all faithfulness and sincerity, and doubtless, they will be heard.

In conclusion, Brethren, let me remind you, that if at all times and under all circumstances, the relations which subsist between the Clergy and their flocks, and the high privileges and

blessings resulting therefrom, ought to be duly observed and highly esteemed ; more especially should they be so at the *present* crisis by every one who calls himself a friend and member of that pure and Apostolic Church by law established in these realms. At a time, when Popery is assuming a menacing and dictatorial attitude on the one hand, and Non-Conformity on the other, no longer satisfied with toleration, seeks the pre-eminence ; and when these two naturally hostile Principles, urged forward by the infidel faction, open and concealed, now a powerful and influential body, scruple not to unite for the overthrow of our scriptural Establishment ; at a time when the admirers of French equality, are not so far deluded as to suppose, that such a system can add at all to the aggregate of human happiness and human virtue, as smitten with a longing for what may be its ultimate consequences, the introduction of French licentiousness also ; at a time when every Institution amongst Us, conservative not of mammon, (for *his* votaries ever flourish and abound,) but of ancient English highmindedness and virtue, is threatened with subversion ; and the Aristocracy of our land, the natural guardians of all that is high and humanizing—one, *too large a part*, in utter hopelessness and recklessness, “*et jam pallida morte futura*,” is abandoning to the Demagogue the post of duty and their Country—Whilst another, literally exemplifying the case

of those, “quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat”—are busily engaged in kindling the fires by which themselves will be the first to be consumed, (and if nothing higher and holier than they were jeopardized, e’en one might be disposed to say, “let what remains of the Constitution, and of our modified Feudalism, go;”) At such a time, I say, the best possible understanding between the Clergy and their flocks should exist, and the Church herself should be the rallying point of all that is virtuous and high-principled amongst Us, not for her own sake only, (for if true to herself *She* will never be deserted by her divine founder,) but for the State’s also.

From the efforts now making in every direction, there are manifest symptoms that all is not lost to the cause of religion and order. Let, then, every element of good, under God, hasten to strengthen and to defend the bulwarks of Zion, and shew by their deeds, as well as by their professions, that they esteem our Establishment the best protection they can possibly have, against ecclesiastical tyranny upon the one hand, and against the spirit of schism and religious insubordination upon the other; and not only so, but against political tyrants and oppressors, whether they be many or whether they be few.

Thus supported, will the Church, by God’s goodness, continue to be a blessing to our land. And I rejoice in “the glad tidings,” and you,

Brethren, will rejoice with me, that the cause of Apostolic Christianity looks brighter in the East, and also in the West. May it continue to prosper and to prevail!

Quà sol flammigeris mundum complexus habenis
 Volvit inexhausto redeuntia sæcula motu,
 Et spargit lucem meliore comâ.*

So shall our sons and subjects both here and in the four quarters of the globe, and those who acknowledge us not, save but in the bonds of Christian brotherhood, be nurtured in the fear and admonition of the Lord, live under the influence of evangelical promises, and seek and enjoy that true peace which passeth all understanding, even from their tenderest years, throughout all the stages of their earthly sojourn—from the time that the waters of regeneration descend upon their heads, till they experience the strengthening and confirming effects of that Apostolic rite, which we have seen administered this day; even until that solemn hour, when they are returned to the dust, whence they were taken, not without a benediction, and a sure and certain hope of the resurrection to life everlasting.

* Claudian.

THE
SUBSTANCE
OF
A SERMON

PREACHED IN EMBER WEEK,

IN THE
CHURCH OF SAINT PAUL,

POOLE.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)

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1835.

tion of her members that they should be seasons of especial prayer. In order to this, she has appointed that her ordinations should take place at four particular seasons of the year, viz., the Sundays after Ember days;* and during those weeks in which the Ember days occur, she has provided prayers to be used daily, that God may "so guide and govern the minds of his servants, the Bishops and Pastors of his flock, that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of the Church;" "that He who has appointed divers Orders in his Church, would give his grace to all those who are to be called to any office and administration in the same, and so replenish them with the truth of his doctrine, and endue them with innocency of life, that they may faithfully serve before Him to the glory of his great name, and the benefit of his holy Church."

And surely such an appointment calls for the attention of all her members! If we believe that "*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,*" what a large increase of spiritual blessings might we reasonably hope for at the hands of her ministers, if each member of our Church would make a point of thus devoting the Ember weeks to that important object for which they were intended. And when we consider the responsibility attached to those to whom is committed the sacred trust of sending forth labourers

* The Ember days are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after

{	1. The first Sunday in Lent.
	2. The Feast of Pentecost.
	3. September 14.
	4. December 13.

into the Lord's vineyard, or the greatness of the work to which those labourers go forth, it is an important part of the duty of every one who feels an interest in the success of the gospel, to make his earnest prayers to God that "there may never be wanting a supply of faithful and zealous men to serve him in his Church ; that when God provides such, *"utterance may be given unto them that they may open their mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel."*—Eph. vi., 19 ; that such *"may be workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*—2 Tim. ii., 15 ; that God would endue them with wisdom from above, with affectionate interest in the souls of men, and with patient perseverance in their work and labour of love. It will be in a devoted attention to this duty awakened among professing christians, that we may look for the fulfilment of God's gracious promises in answer to the prayers of his people, with reference to which he says, *"I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."*—Ezek. xxxvi., 37.

2. As having a reference to the success of their ministry. It was for this object that the apostle entreated the prayers of the Thessalonians ; *"Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you : And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men."*—2 Thess. iii., 1, 2. It is the character of human nature to oppose the progress of the word of God ; the corruption of the human heart rejects its truths and casts aside

crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy."—1 Thess. ii., 19, 20.
"And we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."—2 Cor., i., 14.

Such, then, is the mutual feeling of interest in the promotion of the spiritual influence of religion, under which the Church of God, consisting both of ministers and people, are united together in one common bond of union. Each one that has felt the "gospel to be the power of God unto salvation," is anxious to see the continued influence of that gospel making its way "in the demonstration of the spirit and of power." Each one that has found in his own experience that it hath "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," is continually looking through the weakness of the outward ordinance to the power and grace of Him in whose name it is performed. Are you doing this with reference to yourselves? Then before entering the house of God you earnestly approach a throne of grace to seek a blessing upon the ministry of the word. Are you doing this with reference to others? Then the subject from which I have chosen to address you will fall in with the character of these religious duties in which at this season you are engaged, and with the intention of our Church in setting apart the Ember weeks, for the purpose of reminding us of the solemn obligation that rests upon us to pray for the ministers of the gospel.

Are there those who care not what kind

of ministers are appointed over the church of God ? “ *which say to the seers, see not ; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things ; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits ; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us ?* ”—Is. xxx., 10, 11. We cannot look to such as these for the fulfilment of the duty enjoined in the text. If ministers are enabled faithfully to declare the whole counsel of God, there will be in such no thanksgiving in their behalf, but a resistance to the authority of their message : “ *As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee, but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth.* ”—Jer. xlv., 16, 17. Over such the ministers of the gospel can have no rejoicing ; for their ministry is to them “ *the savour of death unto death.* ”

But are there those to whom that ministry has been “ *the savour of life unto life ?* ” It is to these we would especially address ourselves in the admonition of the text. In them we look for a kindred feeling as it regards their interest in the success of the gospel ; and to the influence of that feeling we appeal with confidence, when we say, “ *Brethren, pray for us.* ” Do not, we entreat you, disappoint us of our hope. In every difficulty that lies before us, under that overwhelming sense of human infirmity which we often feel, it is a great encouragement and comfort to us to know that our people pray for us ; we seem to go forth with fresh energy

and vigour to the work that is before us, when we know that we are not alone in such an arduous contest ; and, "*you striving together with us in your prayers to God for us,*" we feel an increasing confidence and assured hope that the "*weapons of our warfare will be mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds ; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"—2 Cor. x., 4, 5.

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